

PEACESEEKERS: NURTURING LIVING SYSTEM MINISTRY AND MISSION
WITH SURVIVORS OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN AND THROUGH THE URBAN
CHURCH

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“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.’ Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ He said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.’ ”

--Genesis 4:6-10 NASB

“And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

--Jeremiah 29:7 NKJV

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

--Matthew 5:4 NASB

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

--Matthew 5:9 NASB

All scriptures quoted in this thesis are from the NASB version of the bible unless otherwise indicated.

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This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes!
(Psalm 118:23 KJV (Italics and exclamation point added for emphasis))

This work is dedicated to my mother, the late Rosetta Royster Wright. Seeing the call of God on my life, she kept me focused and highlighted the importance of education. As a survivor of violence, she was a community mom who nurtured vitality in God's living systems. I am eternally grateful for her sacrificial investment in my life and the lives of others! Likewise, to my grandparents, John, Lee, Rosa, Catherine, Irene, Mae Ola, my uncle Ronnie, the courageous survivors of The Middle Passage and the rest of the ancestors that have gone home to be with the Lord – This is for you! My profound love and gratitude are extended to my parents, LeRoy, Mattie, and Tyrone. Your support has paved the way for me, helping me on the mountain tops, as well as through the valleys. Your fervent prayers have availed!

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“To Almighty God, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be yours forever and ever. AMEN (Revelation 7:12).”

ABSTRACT

This work is a systemic and analytical study on how the urban church nurtures a Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims. It examines the Church's theology of violence, peace, spirituality, and context, in relationship to survivors of homicide victims as suffering members of God's living systems. Exploring lessons learned from the field of Public Health, it emphasizes the usefulness of the "Socio-ecological Model" and the "Spectrum of Prevention" as tools for urban ministry practitioners. It posits that equipping the urban church for Living System Ministry and Mission will make her more effective over the long run. The framework of this thesis is provided by Eldin Villafañe's "Hermeneutical Circle of Christian Ethics" and proposes the implementation of a Living System Ministry approach to preventing violence and promoting God's peace in cities.

PART I: CLARIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

I think that peace is a beautiful thing. When everything is peaceful around me I feel good about myself and I am stress free. Nowadays it's tough to find a peaceful community. There is always some type of drama going on. I personally think that the only reason people act violently is because of ignorance. This summer two boys were taken from our Cape Verdean community, Michael (Mikey) Tavares and Christopher (Chris) Resendes. I found this shocking and out of control because they were killed one after the other. First I attended Chris' funeral, then Mikey's. The funerals were tragic. The mothers expressed their pain differently. Chris' mother cried out loud, screaming for her son to come back to her. She screamed so much that she lost her voice. Mikey's mother sobbed quietly and stared at the coffin in shock. She looked like her energy had been drained, and she didn't know how to react to the loss of her son. I don't think any mother plans on burying her child. I believe that mothers, instead, plan on the exact opposite.¹

The aforementioned quote was taken from an essay written by tenth grade, Boston Health Careers Academy student Gina Fidalgo. In this quote, Gina allows us to share in her concept of peace and the lack thereof. As we journey with Gina, we see two mothers grieving the loss of their sons, a community impacted by homicide, a young girl's attempt to make sense of it, and an overarching search for peace.

This Thesis-Project will investigate how the urban church nurtures a Living System Ministry and Mission with Survivors of Homicide Victims. Many survivors that this author has interviewed share a less than "shalomic" experience with the urban church in the aftermath of their loved ones' murders. These experiences inform the author's journey toward a living system process with survivors of homicide victims in the urban church. In developing this treatise, there are key concepts and terms that require definition.

¹ Joseph Chéry, *Boston's Book of Peace Vol. VII*. (Boston, MA: Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, 2001), 45-46.

Introductory Definition of Terms

The following terms are developed in greater detail throughout this work. This list serves to introduce some of the vital terms and concepts, providing the reader with a baseline from which to engage the text.

Living System: An orderly, highly complex, and highly interrelated arrangement of living components that work together to accomplish a high-level goal when in proper relationship to each other.²

Living System Ministry: Participation with God as His life flows through His living systems.³

Living System Mission: Participation with God as He cultivates systems thinking and acting within His living systems.

Systems Thinking: A discipline that takes a holistic view of complex, interrelated systems seeking to understand their interconnectedness in relationship to the whole. *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge is the foundational literature source for systems thinking within this discourse.

High-level Thinking: Rooted in the reality that God's living systems are high-level systems, high-level thinking occurs as our eyes are opened by the Spirit of God.⁴ "The only true order is God's order, and it is high level."⁵ Therefore, high-level thinking does not begin with the question, "What can I do," but "How is what I am already doing or planning to do counterproductive?"⁶ High-level thinking demands that we "don't just do something – stand there."⁷ This is to say, we begin by seeing what God is doing and then we align our actions with His.

² Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), xxiv. Living System Ministry and Mission is capitalized throughout this discourse for emphasis.

³ Hall, xxiv.

⁴ Hall, 173.

⁵ Hall, 318.

⁶ Hall, 172.

⁷ Hall, 172.

Low-level Thinking: Low-level thinking is simplistic, cause and effect thinking.⁸ The simplistic cognitive process of humanity sees God's high-order complexity as chaos.⁹ The low-order reasoning of humankind begins with the question, "What can I do?"

Public Health: Refers to the science of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging life among the population as a whole. Peaceseekers uses a biblically-based public health informed approach in its ministries. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Profile of a Discippler: A "learner/systems thinker" who demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit in and through their relationship with Christ and others. This definition arises from the author's discipleship ministry with survivors of homicide victims in relationship with the biblical text, particularly Matthew 28:19-20 and Galatians 5:22-23.

Principles of Peace: Seven core principles utilized to educate and engage the individual and community towards internalization of the complex character of peace. The principles are: faith, hope, love, unity, justice, courage and forgiveness. In the city of Boston, the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute has set forth these principles as the platform on which its mission rests. The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute was founded by Joseph and Clementina Chéry, after the murder of their son Louis.

Interpersonal Violence: "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."¹⁰ Interpersonal violence is a disease in the social system that affects the vitality of the whole system, if it is not addressed.

Pastoral Care: The assiduous support provided socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually by pastors, chaplains and church members for individuals, the church and the community at large.

Survivors of Homicide Victims: Generally, the family members, friends and loved ones of a murder victim. Also referred to as co-victims, this definition may be extended to include the broader community of the murder victim. Within this discourse, the author will use "survivors" and "survivors of homicide victims" interchangeably.

⁸ Hall, 318.

⁹ Hall, 173.

¹⁰ LL Dahlberg, and EG Krug, "Violence: A Global Public Health Problem" in *World Report on Violence and Health*, ed. EG Krug, LL Dahlberg, JA Mercy, AB Zwi, R. Lozano (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2002), 5.

A Brief Prologue to Living System Ministry and Mission

Living System Ministry and Mission is rooted in the fact that God makes orderly, highly complex, and highly interrelated living systems. As these systems work together in proper relationship to one another, high-level goals are accomplished. It is God who defines what the proper relationship is for His living systems. Vitality occurs as we participate with God as God's life flows through God's living systems. What interferes with this process? In accordance with Genesis 3, we live in a fallen world. The fall of man corrupted the system, allowing sin and death to enter. Jesus Christ redeemed the system restoring righteousness and life. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:19-21).

Living System Ministry requires the practitioner to examine subconscious understandings that influence behavior. These mental models can lead the practitioner towards sin versus alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system. A goal of Living System Ministry is to learn to identify and nurture the system's own aligned plans. These are the plans that are organically aligned with the system in which they took root. Identifying and nurturing aligned plans occurs as the Living System Ministry practitioner hears and responds to the requests of the social system. In cultivation of this process, Living System Ministry practitioners might ask the following question: What is happening from a Christian perspective that is really getting the job

done? What are the dynamics that make it work? How can we foster or strengthen what is really working? In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, it is paramount that mental models be examined. Examples of this from the author's ministry experience will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Another goal of Living System Ministry is to understand primary and secondary cultures. A primary culture is one where "most of the people rely on personal, primary relationships and demonstrate such correlating characteristics as oral communication, learning by modeling, identifying with extended family systems, and a spiritual approach to life."¹¹ A secondary culture is one where "the majority of the people rely on impersonal, secondary relationships and demonstrate such correlating characteristics as individualism; a preference for written communication over the spoken word; emphasis on a nuclear family rather than large, extended family groups; a preference for formal learning rather than modeling; and a scientific rather than spiritual approach to life."¹² Learning the characteristics of primary and secondary cultures helps the Living System Ministry practitioner understand how each cultural system sets priorities and gets its work done. Dynamics of these cultural systems in relationship to Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims will be discussed in Chapter Four. The following figure illustrates some of the contrasts between primary and secondary culture.

¹¹ Hall, 20.

¹² Hall, 20.

Figure 1. Contrasts Between Primary and Secondary Culture

| <u>Primary Culture</u> | <u>Secondary Culture</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Relational need-satisfaction | 1. Economic need-satisfaction |
| 2. Extended family systems | 2. Nuclear or adaptive families |
| 3. Oral communication | 3. Written communication |
| 4. Informal learning | 4. Formal learning |
| 5. Spiritual explanations of reality | 5. Scientific, objective, cognitive explanations of reality |

Source: Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 21.

Living System Ministry requires the practitioner to understand and embrace their poverty. This begins with the acknowledgement that we live in a fallen world. This is the practitioner's confession that any wisdom or fruitfulness arising from their work is credited to alignment with God's life flowing through God's living system. The apostle Paul illustrates this point in his First Letter to the Corinthians:

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

Allowing fallenness to be the context of all activity sets the stage for redemptive living, redemptive activity and redemptive ministry. Redemption is at work when we confess

and repent, receive Christ's forgiveness, and exchange our death for his life.¹³ It is in this redemptive method that fruitfulness begins. Dynamics of embracing our poverty and the redemptive method in relationship to Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In Living System Ministry simplicity equals death and complexity equals health. A Living System Ministry interrelates physically, socially and spiritually as a total system. This dynamic yields infinite interrelation capacity and requires complex thought. The reality of multiple numbers of interrelated causes, not a few simplistic causes and effects, leads the living system practitioner away from "one size fits all programming" and works focused mental models. The Living System Ministry practitioner understands that true vitality comes only with aligning oneself with God's life as it flows through God's living system.

Assumptions

The following premises are assumed in this thesis:

1. *Scripture is the foundation on which this thesis builds.* As Christians, our theology informs our ministry practice for better or worse. This exposition presumes that "accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) informs vital ministry practice. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV).

¹³ Hall, 129.

2. *God makes living systems and Living System Ministry and Mission is our goal.* It is God who defines what the proper relationship is for His living systems. Vitality occurs as we participate with God as His life flows through His living systems. Interpersonal violence is a disease in the social system that affects the vitality of the whole system, if it is not addressed. As we pray for God's Kingdom to come and will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, (Matthew 6:10) we are seeking alignment with God's plan for His living systems. Systems thinking is evident in nature, scripture and in the kingdom minded church.
3. *Social analysis bears witness to God's living system process.* Social systems are living systems. Redemptive social transformation flows from individual and corporate spiritual vitality. Proper social analysis allows us to ask good questions understanding that there are a myriad of factors at work at any given time. Through this process we can identify unintended negative returns and faulty mental models, and in rejecting them, cultivate a shared vision for the Kingdom of God.
4. *God's living system process is evident in the field of Public Health.* The discipline of Public Health addresses the health problems of populations (neighborhoods, cities, states, age cohorts, etc). In doing so, public health practitioners utilize a socio-ecological model to acknowledge the highly complex, and interrelated components that impact the health of populations. They are able to identify unintended negative returns in systems and encourage disease prevention and health promotion. This divine natural revelation regarding the

interworking of God's living systems provides useful insight for Living System Ministry practitioners.

5. *Survivors of Homicide Victims are suffering members of God's living system.*

Life is sacred. Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God.¹⁴

When life is taken through murder, the living system suffers. Violence is a disease that impacts the health of God's living systems. Living System Ministry practitioners, participate with God as He brings healing in His living systems.

6. *Understanding and embracing our poverty¹⁵ is key to becoming a Living System*

Ministry practitioner. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and the weak to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27). As we acknowledge our poverty and weakness,¹⁶ we commit to redemptive living, redemptive activity and redemptive ministry. In doing so, we are reminded that we only see lasting fruit/true vitality when we are in alignment with God.

Research Questions

In considering the aforementioned, this treatise will investigate the following research questions:

¹⁴ According to Genesis 1:27, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

¹⁵ In *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age*, Hall presents the importance of "embracing our poverty." Embracing our poverty" encapsulates the idea that fallen people in a fallen world must always use fallenness (as set forth in Genesis 3: The Fall of Man) as the starting point for engagement. And, in doing so, we acknowledge our partnership with God as "He supplies the strength and we supply the weakness." This truth moves us from a "works mental model to a redemptive mental model," acknowledging that we do not cause fruitfulness, we align ourselves with God's fruitfulness. With this as our starting point, it transforms the very essence of how we engage ministry. Hall highlights Revelation 3:17, "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked," as a picture of our poverty. Hall discusses this concept in detail between pages 116-125 of his text.

¹⁶ Hall, 122.

Principal Research Question: How does the urban church nurture Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims? (Chapter Four)

Auxiliary Research Questions:

- A. What theological principles can be drawn from the Bible regarding the importance and nature of Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims? (Chapter Three)
- B. What current literature speaks to the issues surrounding Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims? (Chapter Two)
- C. How can churches serve as agents of God's *shalom* in the issue of urban violence? (Chapter Four)
- D. How can churches effectively teach about violence prevention and the promotion of God's peace? (Chapter Four)
- E. What methodologies and instruments can be used to better understand the dynamics and opportunities of Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims? (Chapter Four)
- F. How can Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims be cultivated in and through a para-church ministry like Peaceseekers? (Chapter Five)

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

But now I see ministry to victims as being redemptively double-edged. As we reach out to victims and rebuild community trust, we can reduce crime – so we have fewer criminal offenders in prison. What could be a more dramatic witness than modeling to the world what it means to restore *shalom* – what the Jews understood as the peace and harmony of the community as God had created it?¹

In the aforementioned quote, Charles Colson reflects on the founding of Prison Fellowship Ministries and his realization that ministry to victims was just as important as ministry to criminal offenders, if the Church was going to have a shalomic witness within its communities. Colson’s revelation speaks to the core contention of this thesis. If followers of Jesus Christ (the Church) are intimately acquainted with the God of Shalom, having thereby experienced God’s Shalom, the Church has a responsibility to share the Shalom of God with a fallen world. In this fallen world, survivors of homicide victims are suffering members of our communities. They too must be engaged as the urban church ministers this biblical peace (shalom) that promises wholeness and reconciliation.

In consideration of this composition’s problem and its setting, this author has spent the last decade engaged in informal interviews with leaders in some of this nation’s largest cities. Many U.S. mayors have joined together in declaring youth violence a public health issue.² A staggering increase in community and domestic violence has left a great number of U.S. families mourning the violent death of a loved one. Lu Redmond,

¹ Charles W. Colson, “Foreword” in *God and the Victim: Theological Reflections on Evil, Victimization, Justice, and Forgiveness*, ed. L. Lampman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) xii.

² U.S. Conference of Mayors, *Youth Violence as a Public Health Crisis*. 76th Annual Meeting, 4d session, (June 20-24, 2008).

a researcher in survivor issues, estimates that there are seven to ten close relatives – not counting friends, neighbors, or coworkers – for each victim.³

According to U.S. Department of Justice data 1, 318, 398 violent victimizations occurred in 2009, including 15, 241 homicides.⁴ Much of the increase in violence in the U.S., which has doubled since the 1950's, has been among adolescents and young adults ages 15-24 years. The effects of a crime are not merely limited to the victim and the perpetrator. Operating under the assumption that each crime victim has three surviving family members, one can calculate that in the year 2009, at least 45,723 people were directly affected by homicide and nearly 4 million were affected by some type of crime. Moreover, these numbers likely under-estimate the number of individuals affected by crime, as they exclude extended family members, friends, church family, classmates, coworkers and do not include friends or loved ones of the perpetrators.

Since its inception, the U.S. criminal justice system has primarily focused on law enforcement. This strategy did not change until 1987, when the American Correctional Association appointed a Victims Task Force that developed 15 recommendations for implementing corrections-based victim services,⁵ marking a shift in focus to include corrections-based victim services. Although victim services have expanded rapidly over the years, statistics indicate only 2% to 15% of victims access

³ Lula Redmond, *Surviving: When Someone You Love Was Murdered* (Clearwater, FL: Psychological Consultation and Education Services, Inc., 1989), 24.

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, "Violent Crime Data," Accessed September 17, 2012. <http://www.justice.gov>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, "Promising Practices and Strategies for Victim Services in Corrections," Accessed September 17, 2012. <http://www.ovc.gov>.

these services⁶ and less than 4% receive any financial compensation as a result of their victimization.⁷

The under-utilization of services is particularly troubling given the evidence that many crime victims suffer long-term effects that could be addressed through victim services. In the only large-scale study of homicide's effects on survivors, Dean Kilpatrick, Director of the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina, reported that approximately a quarter of the people who lose a family member to murder subsequently develop full-blown Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with half developing at least several symptoms. Five percent of those who developed PTSD were still in the full-blown stage after 10 years, and twenty-two per cent were still experiencing at least one or more symptoms.⁸

Another study conducted by Kilpatrick and his colleagues found that more than half of victims of violent crimes had experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but only one third of the symptomatic victims had received any mental health services.⁹ Additionally, almost a third of youth victims in the National Youth Victimization Prevention Study reported being depressed during the year following their victimization.¹⁰

⁶ Office for Victims of Crimes, *Promising Practices and Strategies for Victim Services in Corrections*, Accessed September 17, 2012.

⁷ Office for Victims of Crimes, *Promising Practices and Strategies for Victim Services in Corrections*, Accessed September 17, 2012.

⁸ DG Kilpatrick, HS Resnick and R Acierno, "Health Impact of Interpersonal Violence 3: Implications for Clinical Practice and Public Policy," *Behavioral Medicine* 23 (Summer 1997): 79-85.

⁹ Kilpatrick, Resnick, and Acierno, 79-85.

¹⁰ Sue Boney-McCoy and David Finkelhor, "Is Youth Victimization Related to Trauma Symptoms and Depression?" *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 64, no.6 (1996): 1406-1416.

Research also provides significant evidence about the psychological impact of victimization and the ways in which the psychological trauma may inhibit help-seeking behaviors. Some common reactions associated with violent death include: cognitive dissonance (inability to process what has happened), murderous impulses and rage, fear and vulnerability, conflict of value and belief systems, guilt and blame, stigma, intrusion by other systems such as the media and the criminal justice system, loss of control, and social withdrawal.¹¹

These psychological responses may be compounded by: “financial losses incurred as a result of the victimization (i.e., loss of income if a victim is incapacitated, loss of home in cases of arson, loss of vehicle/difficulty getting to work in case of a stolen car); difficulties encountered with the justice system (i.e., lack of apprehension of suspect; lack of appraisal regarding the status of the case; lack of consultation regarding plea bargains, etc.); and lack of support and/or stigmatization from critical support systems (family, friends, colleagues, etc.), who may be struggling with their own traumatic responses to the event.”¹² A “just world illusion” — this is a just world where people deservedly “reap what they sow”—imbues our culture and may cause others to blame the victim for the crime.¹³ Negative experiences with the U.S. court system that places a large emphasis on the rights of the accused likely play a significant role in deterring people from turning to “the system” for any type of assistance. But, God’s living system, the Church, is called to seek the peace of the city. How could the urban

¹¹ WG Skogan, RC Davis, and AJ Lurigio, “Victims’ needs and victim services: Final report to the National Institute of Justice.” Washington, DC: Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs, 1990, 55.

¹² Skogan, Davis, Lurigio, 55.

¹³ Kilpatrick, Resnick, and Acierno, 79-85.

church align herself with God's living system process with survivors of homicide victims?

The aforementioned information, in conjunction with a review of the literature, suggests that system cultivation is needed in support of contextual and sustainable approaches to preventing violence and promoting God's peace in urban communities. In serving with survivors of homicide victims from various churches and the community at large, it is this author's contention that survivors are important partners in God's Living System Ministry and Mission in the city.

The context and ministry setting of this project is Peaceseekers Ministry in the city of Boston. The mission of Peaceseekers is to cultivate partnerships for preventing violence and promoting God's peace; serving the church through education, consultation and collaboration. Peaceseekers will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

The City of Boston

Boston first incorporated as a town in 1630 with the arrival of the Puritans. Named for St. Botolph, the patron saint of travelers and farming, Boston is one of America's oldest cities. America's first public school was built in Boston in 1635. The American Revolution began in Boston in 1775. Incorporated as a city in 1822, Boston is indeed a city of historic firsts, building the first free public library, and producing John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Catholic president of the nation. Boston plays a central role in American history, home of the Boston Tea Party, the Battle of Bunker Hill, world-renowned hospitals, educational and cultural institutions. The coining of Boston as the "hub of the universe" was first noted by writer Oliver Wendell Holmes. Boston's legacy as a global hub for transportation, trade and technology still rings true today.

According to 2011 census data, the population of Boston is approximately 617,594; 53.9% White, 24.4% Black, 17.5% Hispanic and 8.9% Asian. Boston is home to many institutions of higher education, world renowned hospitals, numerous businesses, faith communities and professional organizations. The top six languages for this community for those eighteen and older are English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, French Creole, and Vietnamese.

One of every 10 children attending the Boston Medical Center pediatric primary care clinic witnessed a shooting or stabbing before the age of 6 years,¹⁴ half in the home, half on the streets. In the 2008 Boston Youth Survey conducted by the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, 65% of Boston teens reported witnessing one or more acts of violence in the past year and 38% of them reported that they themselves were physically assaulted.¹⁵ For two decades, Boston's longest serving Mayor, Thomas Menino requested the support of the faith community in addressing the epidemic of violence in the city. Boston's current Mayor, Martin Walsh has also prioritized this issue seeking continued collaboration with communities of faith.

In 2010, Boston had 74 homicides followed by 62 in 2011 and 58 in 2012.¹⁶ This dilemma is not just a concern for Boston; nationally, cities are struggling to address the issue of violence and its disproportionate impact on youth. Homicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24. Among young people ages

¹⁴ Betsy McAlister-Groves, *Children Who See Too Much: Lessons from the Child Witness to Violence Project* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002), 12.

¹⁵ Harvard School of Public Health https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/120/2012/10/2008_bys_health_of_boston_tables_for_web.pdf (accessed, September 12, 2011).

¹⁶ Boston Globe <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/01/01/homicides-track-fall-boston-for-third-straight-year/KK0mMsHDQcyS89vrBGtVUO/story.html>, (accessed, January 3, 2013).

10-24, homicide is the leading cause of death for African-Americans, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics, and the third leading cause of death for American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asian Pacific Islanders.¹⁷

The Boston Miracle

The Boston Miracle, also known as the Boston Strategy and the Boston Model, is a story of multifaceted alliances yielding unprecedented results. The 90s proved to be an extraordinary decade for the city of Boston. The rising tide of youth violence sparked by the eighties arrival of crack cocaine to U.S. cities, contributed to Boston's highly volatile climate. In the economically distressed neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester resided a majority of the homicide victims, as well as the perpetrators of these crimes. These perpetrators and victims were predominantly African-American and Latino young men. They were active in gangs and stuck in a cycle of violence. The communities that housed these young people were overtaken with a sense of hopelessness. In 1990, violence in Boston peaked with 152 homicides, including 62 youth homicides aged 24 and under.¹⁸ Whereas violence peaked in 1990, there was a twenty-nine month period ending in January 1998, where there were no teenage homicides.¹⁹ This phenomenon came to be known as the Boston Miracle. The Boston Miracle has received considerable national and international attention. Many wonder if Boston's success can be duplicated in other communities. Is what happened in Boston

¹⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/YV-DataSheet-a.pdf> (accessed, October 26, 2012).

¹⁸ Christopher Winship, "The End of a Miracle? Crime, Faith, and Partnership in Boston in the 1990's" in *Long March Ahead: African American Churches and Public Policy in Post-Civil Rights America* by DR Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press; 2004), 2.

¹⁹ Winship, "The End of the Miracle?" 2.

truly a miracle? How does one explain this decline in youth homicide? Where was the church during this volatile era of Boston's history? Was she seeking the peace of her city?

Boston has much of which to be proud as we review recent history. Nowhere is this more dramatically illustrated than in violence prevention and public safety. The basic elements of the "Boston Miracle" provide a valuable perspective. The drop in homicide rates among major US cities has been steepest in Boston. Our rates have dropped 61.2 percent, from 152 homicides in 1990 to 59 in 1996. By 1998, 35 murders took place. For a 29-month period ending in January 1998, Boston had no teenage homicides. Since then there have been 17. Much of this success can be attributed to the racial climate created by Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Police Commissioner Paul F. Evans. When contrasted with the racial climate of the busing crisis of the mid-1970s, it is indeed a miracle. In the black community during the 1980s, a number of anticrime initiatives were led by figures such as the Rev. Bruce H. Wall, then of the Twelfth Baptist Church, and Don Mohammed of the Nation of Islam. Their contributions fertilized the soil for what was to emerge. Ten years later, black churches began to mobilize in the aftermath of a stabbing incident at Morning Star Baptist Church in the spring of 1992. So what is the next chapter?²⁰

The aforementioned statement, by Rev. Eugene F. Rivers III, appeared in the Tuesday, October 5, 1999 Op-Ed section of the Boston Globe. The article was entitled, *Boston Can Lead the Nation in Saving High-Risk Youths*. Can Boston indeed lead the nation in "saving high-risk youths?" There are many people who "take credit" for what happened in Boston. Does the credit belong to the Church? Police? Politicians? God? In Boston, you will find that the answer to this question is contingent upon who you ask.

So, what did happen in Boston? Can you simply follow the "Boston Model" to reduce violence in your community? Many funders, public health officials, government representatives, and legal and criminal justice professionals believe that you can. We want to tell you that there is no single model to replicate. What happened in Boston is a broad community process that led to changes in attitudes and beliefs and to the development of a wide spectrum of programs throughout

²⁰ Eugene Rivers, "Boston Can Lead the Nation in Saving High-Risk Youths" *The Boston Globe*, 5 October 1999.

the city. We believe it is this process that is responsible for Boston's success. You can use this process to change your community.²¹

Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak offer us a public health explanation to the Boston Model, acknowledging that this phenomenon has also been labeled as the Boston Strategy and the Boston Miracle. This author tends to agree with these public health practitioners, for the broad community process they are describing comes with the church seeking the peace of her city. It is evident to me that true public health can only be manifest when God's *shalom* is at work. God is the creator of the city and God must be active in restoring an earthly city to holistic health.

Survivors of Homicide Victims

There are many roles the churches can play. Survivors need the church to listen to them. Churches can be quick to quote the scriptures and tell you to forgive. At one point, I stopped going to confession because it was all about asking God to forgive. I wasn't ready to talk about forgiveness. While many churches have prison ministries, most don't work with the survivors of homicide victims – actually none that I know of. We have to be taken through the journey as well. Don't tell us our child's murder was God's will. They need to sit with us, listen, learn about grief, be flexible, and understand that no two survivors are the same. Eleven years later, I can call my priest at any time. He is always available to listen. We don't always want an answer. We may have the answer; we just want a safe place where we won't be judged for the way we think or feel. Normally the church is there during the funeral, we also need them to be there after the funeral. Grief is always a part of you. Churches need to develop survivor's ministries. Every church with a prison ministry should have a survivor's ministry. Wherever there is a prisoner, there is a victim. The Church can encourage them to journey towards healing at the same time.²²

The aforementioned statement was made by Clementina Chéry in an interview with the author. Clementina and Joseph Chéry founded the Louis D. Brown Peace

²¹ Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak, *Murder Is No Accident: Understanding and Preventing Youth Violence in America* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 2-3.

²² Clementina Chéry, Co-Founder of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute in Massachusetts, interview by author, Dorchester: MA, August 5, 2005.

Institute in 1993 following the murder of their son Louis. The information provided by Mrs. Chéry is invaluable. She speaks of the need for the peace of God following the murder of a loved one, and the role of the church therein.

“Approximately 16.4 million people in the United States have been affected by homicide. Five million adults have experienced the murder of an immediate family member; 6.6 million people have experienced the murder of a relative other than a family member, and 4.8 million have experienced the murder of a close friend.”²³ These statistics, highlighted in an American Journal of Preventative Medicine article co-authored by Mrs. Chéry, speak to the prevalence of homicide survivorship in the United States. Based on the literature review, the author’s experience working with survivors of homicide victims internationally, nationally and locally, and for the purposes of this discourse, the author will highlight several areas that the Living System Ministry practitioner must be cognizant of in nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church. These areas are set forth keeping in view the complexity of 1) the impact of surviving the loss of a loved one, 2) redemption of the fallen physical, social, and spiritual realms, and 3) discernment of how living system ministry gets done. They are: 1) the impact of survivorship on physical health, 2) the impact of survivorship on psychological health, 2) the impact of survivorship on social health, 3) the impact of survivorship on spiritual health.

²³ Marci Feldman Hertz, Deborah Prothrow-Stith & Clementina Chéry, “Homicide Survivors: Research and Practice Implications” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 29, no.5 (Dec 2005): 288-295.

The Impact of Survivorship on Physical Health

Keeping in mind the complex, interrelated nature of living systems, the Living System Ministry practitioner must be cognizant of potential physical health risks/symptoms for survivors of murder victims. “These include but are not limited to: increased heart rate or blood pressure, headaches, changes in appetite, fatigue, nightmares, muscle tension, difficulties with digestion, insomnia, breathing problems, fainting, nausea, changes in libido, hypersensitivity, hyperarousal, hypervigilance.”²⁴ In Mrs. Chery’s quote above, she stresses the need for the church to listen. As the church listens to survivors of homicide victims, she may hear themes of physical health and discern God calling her to nurture Living System Ministry.

The Impact of Survivorship on Psychological Health

Due to the traumatic nature of murder, survivors of homicide victims have an increased risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). “While the literature shows a variance in defining PTSD, it is generally defined using the six required criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV), including: 1) traumatic exposure, 2) re-experiencing symptoms, 3) avoidance/numbing symptoms, 4) hyper-arousal symptoms, 5) duration of at least one month, and 6) severity (must cause clinically significant distress or functional impairment).”²⁵ “Other potential psychological health risks/symptoms for survivors of murder victims include but are not limited to: difficulties with concentration and decision-making, difficulty setting priorities, confusion, impaired memory, depression,

²⁴ Hertz, “Homicide Survivors,” 290.

²⁵ Hertz, “Homicide Survivors,” 289.

abuse of alcohol/drugs, self-blame, overwhelming thoughts and memories (including, constant thoughts about the circumstances of the death).”²⁶ In Mrs. Chery’s quote above, she stresses the need for the church to listen and be careful with engaging survivors around the topic of forgiveness. She also expresses the need for the church to develop survivor’s ministries alongside prison ministries. Considering common psychological risks/symptoms, alongside the recommendations of Mrs. Chéry, may prove helpful to Living System Ministry practitioners. As the church listens to survivors of homicide victims, she may hear themes of psychological health and discern God calling her to nurture Living System Ministry.

The Impact of Survivorship on Social Health

In nurturing Living System Ministry with survivors of homicide victims, considering the impact of survivorship on social health is important. Impactful areas include but are not limited to: social withdrawal and alienation, increased conflict in relationships, increased risk for divorce, work and school difficulties, decreased feelings of safety and security, as well as a desire for revenge.²⁷ In Mrs. Chery’s quote above, she expressed the need for the church to refrain from telling survivors that their loved ones murder “was God’s will.” In saying this, she challenges the church to recognize its culture of “Christianese,”²⁸ using language and catch all phrases like “it was God’s will” may serve to socially isolate, re-traumatize, and spiritually wound survivors. Pastoral

²⁶ A. Arnick-McMullen, D Kilpatrick, and H Resnick. “Homicide as a Risk Factor for PTSD Among Surviving Family Members.” *Behavior Modification* 15 (1991): 545-59.

²⁷ A. Arnick-McMullen, D Kilpatrick, and H Resnick, 545-59.

²⁸ “Christianese” can be defined as “a communicable language within the Christian culture with words and phrases created, redefined, and/or patented that applies only to the Christian sphere of influence that may prove to be confusing and sometimes insulting to those who don’t understand. Adapted from www.urbandictionary.com

care, counseling and discipleship with survivors of homicide victims require a change in language and mental models.²⁹

Living System Ministry practitioners must also be aware of the tendency to rush survivors to “move beyond grief.” Research has shown that the length of time since the homicide is not a predictor of distress levels.³⁰ Survivors never “get over” the fact that their loved one was murdered, but slowly journey towards a “new normal.” One survivor described this process in likeness to the life of an amputee, “you learn to live without the limb, but continue to experience pain and the realization that the limb should be there.” Experiencing setbacks in grief is common as complex, interrelated living systems require interaction with the grief of others, criminal justice proceedings, holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, interactions with “biblical survivors,”³¹ engagement with the media, the church, the city, all of which re-awaken grief for survivors. Dr. Douglas Hall states, “when, in ministering to an individual, we can also be acutely aware of the person’s host social system, we can then not only relate with the individual, but also nurture the immune system of the sick social system that is impacting the person’s malaise.”³² The Living System Ministry practitioner realizes that nurturing Living System Ministry with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church requires multi-faceted systemic engagement toward a strengthened immune system. “As

²⁹ A mental model is an inner understanding that tells us how to take action. The language of mental models is introduced by Douglas Hall in his discussion of living system ministry. Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010) p. 89. Mental models will be discussed further in chapter 4.

³⁰ A. Arnick-McMullen, D Kilpatrick, and H Resnick, 545-59.

³¹ The phrase “biblical survivors” refers to those in scripture who are survivors of murder victims (i.e. Adam and Eve). It is helpful for the urban church to understand that as she preaches and teaches from the scripture, the biblical text may reawaken grief in survivors of murder victims.

³² Hall, 331.

the immune system of the social system becomes healthier, then healed people within the recovering social system are able to see ministry explode in ways far beyond what any one person could imagine or any one organization produce. When the person and the social system both become healthy, the person's healing is less likely to be unraveled later by the social system."³³ As the church listens to survivors of homicide victims, she may hear themes of social health and discern God calling her to nurture Living System Ministry and Mission.

The Impact of Survivorship on Spiritual Health

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, considering the impact of survivorship on spiritual health is vital. In the aftermath of murder, one's faith in God and in humanity can be shaken. Some survivors of homicide victims have reported the following: feeling distant from God or closer to God, questioning of one's belief system or holy text, finding strength and peace through prayer, anger at or frustration with clergy for inadequate support in the aftermath of homicide, anger at or frustration with church/church members for inconsiderate statements, lack of supportive ministries, ignorance of helpful referral resources, non-acceptance of memorials (shirts, buttons, etc) and other events or ways of honoring the memory of loved ones, lack of support for survivors that are not members of the local church, helpfulness of bible studies exploring seven biblical principles of peace (faith, hope, love, unity, justice, forgiveness, courage).

In seeking true spiritual health, Living System Ministry practitioners uphold systemic missiology which "recognizes the lead role of God's larger, living social systems to be the vehicles or engines for his work in spreading the kingdom of God. In

³³ Hall, 331.

order to work in harmony with these larger physical, social, and spiritual systems, the urban church must adopt new ways of thinking.”³⁴ “When the three realms are relating, as they were created to be, they tell the story of the Creator and give Him glory.”³⁵ As the church listens to survivors of homicide victims, she may hear themes of spiritual health and discern God calling her to nurture Living System Ministry and Mission.

Violence as a Public Health Issue

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church can learn a great deal from the discipline of public health. Public health refers to the science of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging life among the population as a whole.³⁶ Public health practitioners have contended that violence is among the biggest health threats in the United States. Interpersonal violence has invaded homes, schools, and communities everywhere, reaching what public health experts now conclude is epidemic proportions. Images of violence are frequently associated with the culture of the United States. Western movies, television series, and music videos glamorize violence. Violence is everywhere in the American psyche and culture. The rates of interpersonal violence are higher in the United States than any other industrialized nation.³⁷ For public health practitioners, violence is a learned behavior that is therefore preventable. The devastation of communities most directly impacted by violence is best understood, according to Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, as a reaction to

³⁴ Hall, 328.

³⁵ Hall, 329.

³⁶ Charles E Winslow, “The Untilled Fields of Public Health,” 23-33.

³⁷ LL Dahlberg, and EG Krug, “Violence A Public Global Health Problem,” 1-25.

poverty, to over-crowding, and to an American culture where violence “is as American as apple pie.”³⁸

Public health practitioners see violence as an epidemic; understanding that the effects of violence, like other infectious disease, are not confined to the person carrying the illness. “The aftershocks of a killing frequently travel along the airwaves through the television media and into homes that may be hundreds or thousands of miles from the incident. And sensationalized acts of violence – ones that take place in unexpected locations like schools and workplaces – tend to get even more media attention. It’s a reflection of how widespread and commonplace violence has become that it takes an unusual death to provoke a normal response of shock and disbelief. More damaging than the gruesome, but realistic, news coverage are the action movies and violent cartoons aimed at children. Children have difficulty distinguishing between fiction and fact; they absorb information uncritically from television, as if it was a factual source. Many of a child’s earliest and deepest impressions are created by watching the televised world where violence is a daily commonplace occurrence and the commission of violence is generally portrayed powerful and exciting. Some of the most costly consequences of American violence are: the rise in episodes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); over-burdened hospital emergency rooms and related trauma services; economic flight from distressed neighborhoods; and a huge shifting of resources from human services into the criminal justice system.”³⁹ The chief aim for public health practitioners is preventing violence before it occurs. Understanding violence “epidemiologically”

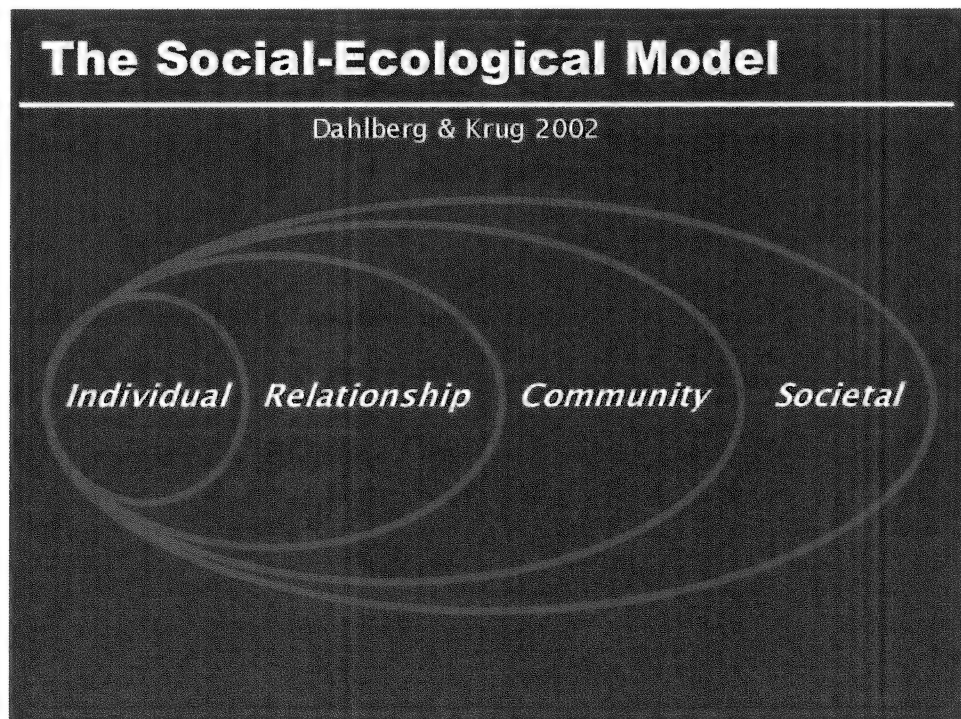
³⁸ Deborah Prothrow-Stith, *Deadly Consequences* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 11.

³⁹ Larry Cohen and Susan Swift, “A Public Health Approach to the Epidemic in the United States” *Environment and Urbanization* 5 (October 1993): 54.

involves looking at the underlying causes and major risk factors that contribute to violence. For Living System Ministry practitioners this speaks to the multiple interrelated causes impacting the system.

In investigating the call of the urban church to nurture Living System Ministry And Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the church must recognize that survivors, the church and the city are all living systems. In doing so, public health reveals critical factors and areas of engagement for the church's education and consideration with this population. Three public health tools/resources that will be considered in this work: 1.) The social-ecological model, 2.) The relationship between public health and criminal justice in the prevention continuum, and 3.) The spectrum of prevention.

*The Socio-Ecological Model*⁴⁰



⁴⁰ LL Dahlberg, and EG Krug, "Violence A Public Global Health Problem," 1-25.

For public health practitioners, the ultimate goal is to stop violence before it occurs. Prevention requires education and understanding of the interrelated factors that influence violence. While it is impossible to comprehend all of the interrelated factors at work, the principles that inform the socio-ecological model are in line with Living System Ministry and Mission. The social-ecological model considers the complexity of interaction between the individual, relationship, community, and societal factors.

Individual

The individual sector speaks to the biological and personal history factors that influence the potential of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. These factors include abuse history, age, education, income, etc. Individual prevention strategies are designed to promote attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that prevent violence. These strategies may include education and life skills training. For the Living System Ministry practitioner, the church is recognized as a “family training center.”⁴¹ The church is a family of faith with its own language and culture. This sometimes lends itself to a “double consciousness,” permitting members of the church to behave one way in the company of their church family and another way with everyone else. The church is uniquely positioned to reach the whole family, walking alongside men, women, boys and girls, equipping them with skills for life. These skills must include how to translate theology to practice concerning themes of power, privilege, difference, violence and peace.

⁴¹ Willie Richardson, *Reclaiming the Urban Family: How to Mobilize the Church as a Family Training Center* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 25.

Relationship

The relationship sector speaks to the close relationships that may impact the risk of experiencing violence as a perpetrator or victim. Prevention strategies in this area may include mentoring and peer programs that promote healthy relationships and problem solving skills. For the Living System Ministry practitioner, development of peer facilitated ministries, Christian education and spiritual formation structures that promote life to life discipleship are important. These structures must intentionally equip clergy, lay leaders and congregants in a holistic theology of shalom, conflict resolution, problem solving and translating that theology to practice in everyday life.

Community

The community sector involves settings in which social relationships occur, (churches, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods) and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with becoming perpetrators or victims of violence. Community prevention strategies in this area are typically designed to impact the climate, processes, and policies in a given system. Social norm and social marketing campaigns are often used to foster community climates that promote healthy relationships. For the Living System Ministry practitioner, training churches to utilize community assets, and explore, wrestle with and embrace their journeys toward a theology of violence, a theology of peace and a theology of the home is key. Theology impacts the way a ministry teaches about and responds to issues. Churches must examine if violence is preventable or inevitable according to their theology. A unified message must be taught through sermons and throughout the entire spiritual formation/Christian education structure. Oppressive church policies and by-laws must also be addressed if they are

victimizing any part of the worshipping community. Pastoral care must extend to the diverse settings in which the congregation participates.

Societal

The societal sector examines the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural norms. Other large societal factors include the health, economic, educational, criminal justice and social policies that help to maintain economic or social disparities. For the Living System Ministry practitioner, this involves engagement within the community at large, being aware of social and cultural norms that are at work in the city, versed in the disparities that are at work and in tune with the vitality that arises from the same. A current example of this would be the protests that are taking place nationwide regarding police involved shootings of unarmed boys/men of color. Pastoral care at this level would involve being informed about and having an incarnational presence within these matters as God's life flows through God's living system.

Learning from the discipline of public health allows Living System Ministry practitioners to be better informed about the factors that place people at risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence. As set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "prevention strategies should include a continuum of activities that address multiple levels of the model. These activities should be developmentally appropriate and conducted across the lifespan. This approach is more likely to sustain prevention efforts over time than any single intervention"⁴²

⁴² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/SEM_Framework-a.pdf, (accessed November 25, 2011).

While this is clearly a “works method”⁴³ for Living System Ministry practitioners, Public health has learned how to identify vitality and address unintended negative consequences through a process of evaluation. However, because public health is missing spirituality, defined as the relationship of the living system to God, it is also missing the truth of a fallen world yielding the necessity of a “redemptive method.” Because of this, public health practitioners often find themselves in the midst of political battles over resources as the language and practice of redemption is not readily welcomed in the world’s systems. This would require parts of the system admitting fault and/or unintended wrong which is often not applauded and consistently punished. An example of this would be the primary focus on criminal justice strategies versus prevention strategies.

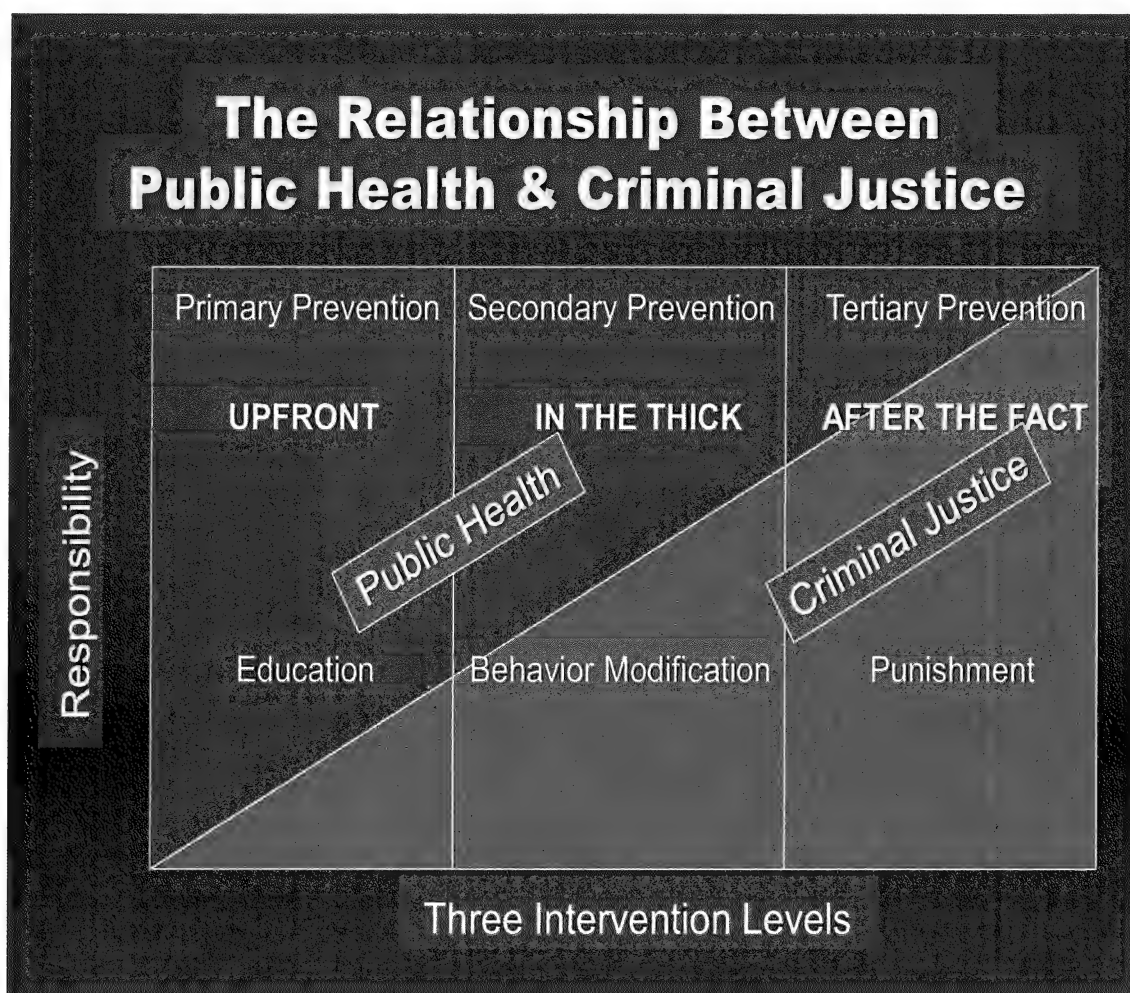
In this author’s work as a consultant with cities within the United States, it is almost inevitable that a very large portion of any city’s budget supports the criminal justice system. This perhaps is the unintended negative consequence of a shift towards “zero tolerance,” “war on drugs” and “lock em up” policies that have been commonplace throughout more recent decades.⁴⁴ While criminal justice is a necessary and important part of a city’s living system, these policies have skewed resources away from prevention. This is an unattended negative consequence as research shows that

⁴³ The works method, also known as the works mental model, describes the process by which most Westerners set about to accomplish tasks. This method includes the following: 1) I see a need; 2) I make a plan to meet the need; 3) I do the plan; 4) I get returns. After getting returns, this method recycles back around to “I see a need” and continues in that fashion. The concern with this approach is that it is a simplistic, mechanistic way of thinking which often does not take into consideration the complexity of living systems. The language of “works method” is introduced by Douglas Hall in his discussion of Living System Ministry. Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster*, 104-115. The works method will be discussed further in chapter 4.

⁴⁴ Larry Cohen, V Chavez and S Chehimi, *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 323.

prevention is effective and less expensive than the alternative.⁴⁵ Research also shows that cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved lower violence rates.⁴⁶

The Relationship between Public Health and Criminal Justice^{47,48}



⁴⁵ Prothrow-Stith, *Murder is no Accident*, 35.

⁴⁶ Billie Weiss, *An Assessment of Youth Violence Prevention Activities in USA Cities* (Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY) through Violence Prevention) June 2008.

⁴⁷ Larry Cohen, V Chavez and S Chehimi, *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 323.

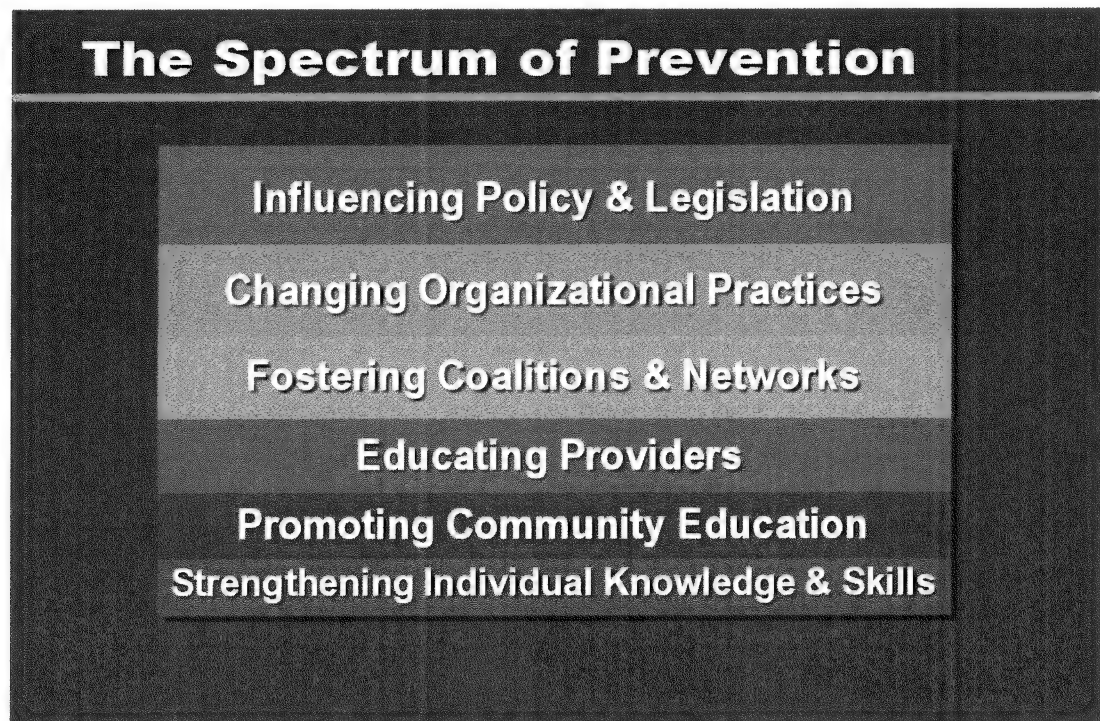
⁴⁸ This chart is adapted from the original version to include the language of “Upfront, In the Thick, and After the Fact.” These phrases were suggested by a group of young people in Philadelphia during a training session which I conducted with them as part of a Boston-based Public health consulting team. They felt that this language made the categories easily understandable versus the language of “primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.”

The aforementioned figure reflects the relationship between public health and criminal justice in the prevention continuum. The prevention continuum includes primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention includes approaches that take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization. Secondary prevention includes the immediate responses after violence has occurred to deal with the consequences in the short-term. Tertiary prevention includes the long-term responses after violence to deal with the lasting consequences and treatment interventions. In considering the relationship between public health and criminal justice, public health is heavily primary prevention with its focus on education; while criminal justice is more punishment and tertiary prevention focused. If the relationship of the church to public health and criminal justice was plotted above, considering the prevention continuum, we would find that the church's relational distribution would be more similar to public health.

In teaching the prevention continuum to a group of young people in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, they renamed these areas "upfront," "in the thick" and "after the fact." Renaming the categories helped the group to 1) internalize the prevention continuum, 2) identify the importance of a holistic approach to violence prevention, and 3) more clearly identify the city's resources throughout the continuum. Education around public health principles such as this one is important as the church nurtures Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims. Many public health principles bear witness to Living System Ministry and the holistic nature of shalom. To this end,

Peaceseekers uses a biblically based, public health informed approach to seeking the peace of cities.⁴⁹

The Spectrum of Prevention^{50 51}



In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, pastoral care occurs not just with individuals and the church but also the community at large. This pastoral care is the assiduous support provided socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually by pastors, chaplains and church members. It is often easier (though still a challenge) for the

⁴⁹ Peaceseekers uses a biblically-based, public health informed approach in its violence prevention/peace promotion work with churches. A brief introduction to violence as a public health issues is being presented now in order to inform the later development of Peaceseekers strategies in Chapter Four. Peaceseekers will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

⁵⁰ Larry Cohen, V Chavez and S Chehimi, *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

⁵¹ The Spectrum of Prevention offers a systematic framework for developing effective and sustainable primary prevention programs. The Spectrum of Prevention was originally developed by Larry Cohen in 1983 while working as director of prevention programs at the Contra Costa County Health Department. It is based on the work of Dr. Marshall Swift (1975) in preventing developmental disabilities.

church to conceptualize this support at the individual level. It is most difficult for churches to conceptualize this support at the local church and community-at-large levels. If it is difficult to conceptualize this support, it often becomes difficult for the church to align herself with God as God's life flows through God's living system. Trained eyes and ears, transformed minds and bowed knees, assist the church in her discernment of God's vitality at work in God's living system. The spectrum of prevention is a tool to help the church as she discerns God's life flow in preventing violence and promoting shalom in God's living system.

Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills

This prevention area focuses on enhancing individual skills that are essential in healthy behaviors. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, the bible is the foundational knowledge and skills building text. Utilizing biblically-based, public health informed approaches in strengthening individual knowledge and skills is key in shaping shalom promoting pastoral preaching, worship services and Christian education/spiritual formation/discipleship structures in the urban church. These structures must equip individuals to "do the bible" in alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system. This will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

Promoting Community Education

This prevention area involves reaching people with information and resources in order to promote their health and safety. For public health practitioners, strategies may take the form of community events, forums, posters, campaigns, etc. These strategies assist community members with internalization of principles, encouraging them to take

ownership of the message and begin to initiate their own activities that support it.

Biblically, this would be the process of not just being a hearer but being a doer of the word⁵² and teaching others to do the same. This is what we see in the biblical command to make disciples as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, this is an important principle for the urban church to cultivate. We will discuss more of what this might look like in Chapter Four.

Educating Providers

This area of the prevention spectrum focuses on educating providers – those who are a trusted source of health-related information.⁵³ Clergy, chaplains and church members become trusted sources of shalom-related information as they are discipled to do and be so.⁵⁴ These learners/systems thinkers demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in and through their relationship with Christ and others. Many well-meaning clergy, chaplains and church members struggle to become the “trusted sources of shalom-related information” simply because they have not been equipped to do/be so. Seminaries, divinity schools and biblical institutes must review their curricula and commit to foundational revisions that will equip leaders for living system ministry and mission. This will enhance the church’s ability to align herself with God’s life as it flows through God’s living system. Peaceseekers cultivates partnerships to educate the church in this area. This will be discussed in more detail and Chapter Four.

⁵² James 1:22 states, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

⁵³ Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, 15.

⁵⁴ Matthew 28:19-20 states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Fostering Coalitions and Networks

This area of the prevention spectrum focuses on collaboration and community organizing. Fostering collaborative approaches brings together broad participation, cultivating a like-minded critical mass. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, this is an area that requires attention. The church universal and within every city is God's living system. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to bring together the church on one accord. The church has been known to allow her differences (denominational, ethnic, economic, etc) to separate her. Likewise, the church often disagrees as to what partnership with those outside of the body of Christ entails. Coalitions and expanded partnerships are vital in successful public health movements.⁵⁵ The church is a mighty movement committed to bringing holistic health to every nation. As she aligns herself with God's life, as it flows through God's living system, she will seek the shalom of the city fostering coalitions and networks that do the same.

Changing Organizational Practices

This area of the prevention spectrum deals with organizational change from a systems perspective. Reshaping the general practices of key organizations can affect both health and norms.⁵⁶ Nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims requires that the church examine/change her organizational practices. If the church becomes a learning team that upholds the principles of shalom, the practices that flow from those principles will be more sustainable. Organizational practices that arise from systemic organizational principles are largely embraced and avoid the

⁵⁵ Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, 16.

⁵⁶ Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, 17.

resistance that comes through policy change. As shalomic organizational practices arise and are internalized, the church becomes a model of shalomic health for other organizations.

Influencing Policy and Legislation

For public health practitioners, this area of the prevention spectrum has the potential for achieving the broadest impact across a community. Policy is the set of rules that guide the activities of government or quasi-governmental organizations.⁵⁷ As policy sets the foundation by mandating what is expected, the potential for communitywide change in social norms is high. For the Living System Ministry practitioner this concept raises the idea of “resistance to policy change.” This is also true for public health. While resistance to policy change is a valid dynamic, influencing policy and legislation does not occur in isolation. All of the other areas or levels of the prevention spectrum are interrelated and work together to cultivate change. A public health example of this is smoking. Smoking used to be the accepted social norm in the U.S.A. Strengthening individual knowledge and skills, promoting community education, educating providers, fostering coalitions and networks, and changing organizational practices all worked together over time to influence policy and legislation around smoking and ultimately to change the social norm here in the United States.

As the church nurtures Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, the spectrum of prevention is a useful public health tool to assist her discernment as she seeks to align herself with God’s life flowing through God’s living system.

⁵⁷ Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, 18.

Now that we've reviewed the problem and its setting, as well as taken a brief look at the core ideologies that illumine this discourse, let us review the foundational literary works that have informed and challenged the development of this thesis.

PART II: CONCEPTUALIZATION

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In considering how the urban church nurtures Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the literature is limited. While this is the case, the holistic nature of Living Systems Ministry and Mission in the urban church and the journey towards a living systems theology incorporates truths from various disciplines. The literature reflected in this review include the following five areas: 1) Complex Systems, 2) Theology of Peace and Violence, 3) Theology from Below, 4) Violence and Public Health, and 5) Diversity and Discipleship. The texts discussed reflect the foundational literature sources that have impacted this practitioner's work.

Complex Systems

We are complex beings living in a complex world full of complex systems. If the urban church seeks to minister within this complexity, she must understand that God makes living systems and seek deeper insight into the multifaceted, interrelated reality of the same. The works reviewed in this section lend insight to this dynamic. The foundational literature source reviews include: *The Cat and the Toaster* by Douglas Hall with Judy Hall and Steve Daman, and *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge.

The Cat and The Toaster: Living System Ministry In A Technological Age By Douglas Hall, Judy Hall and Steve Daman

“Cat and Toaster: The cat, representing the living creations that God makes, is a highly complex and thoroughly interrelated living system. The toaster, representing what people make, is a comparatively simple constructed thing.”¹ This is the uncomplicated metaphor Douglas Hall uses to frame the highly complex dynamic of living systems

¹ Douglas A. Hall, *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 55.

operating within a technological age. Hall uses his personal journey through over forty years of ministry to introduce a “living system theology” if you will. Grounded in the biblical text, informed by systems thinking, Hall takes the reader on an excursion of “Understanding Our Times,” “Embracing Our Poverty,” “Discovering Our Wealth,” “Aligning Our Actions,” “Opening Our Doors” and “Beginning Our Journey.” These are the sections Hall uses to structure his discourse

In the “Understanding Our Times” section of Hall’s work, he highlights the importance of the practitioner’s understanding of culture, the city, the urban church and the times, all in relationship to God’s living system design. Hall warns that it is easy to become overwhelmed by living system complexities, but as we grow in our understanding of God’s living system design, the dynamics of primary and secondary oriented cultures and the role of the urban church, our ministry and mission become clearer. A primary culture is one where “most of the people rely on personal, primary relationships and demonstrate such correlating characteristics as oral communication, learning by modeling, identifying with extended family systems, and a spiritual approach to life.”² A secondary culture is one where “the majority of the people rely on impersonal, secondary relationships and demonstrate such correlating characteristics as individualism; a preference for written communication over the spoken word; emphasis on a nuclear family rather than large, extended family groups; a preference for formal learning rather than modeling; and a scientific rather than spiritual approach to life.”³ Learning the characteristics of primary and secondary cultures helps the Living System

² Hall, 20.

³ Hall, 20.

Ministry practitioner understand how each cultural system sets priorities and gets its work done. These ideas informed this author's framing and further investigation of the interplay of diversity, power and privilege on the urban churches ministry with survivors of homicide victims. It also assisted Peaceseekers in its analysis of the impact of racism on discipleship dynamics with this population.

In the "Embracing Our Poverty" and "Discovering Our Wealth" sections of Hall's work, he highlights the requirement of Living System Ministry practitioners to understand and embrace their poverty, while discovering their wealth. This begins with the acknowledgement that we live in a fallen world.⁴ This is the practitioner's confession that any wisdom or fruitfulness arising from their work is credited to alignment with God's life flowing through God's living system. The apostle Paul illustrates this point in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

Hence, Living System Ministry practitioners discover their wealth only when they embrace their poverty; for it is through Christ Jesus that fruitfulness is restored to all of God's living systems. For Hall, allowing fallenness to be the context of all activity sets the stage for redemptive living, redemptive activity and redemptive ministry. Redemption

⁴ Referencing the fall of humanity in Genesis 3.

is at work when we confess and repent, receive Christ's forgiveness, and exchange our death for his life.⁵ It is in this redemptive method that fruitfulness begins.

In the "Aligning Our Actions" section of Hall's work, he highlights the importance of the practitioner's receiving the training and discipline of the Lord, resulting in Christ-like mental models. For Hall, vitality occurs as the church participates with God as His life flows through His living systems. Living System Ministry requires the practitioner to examine subconscious understandings that influence behavior. "Adam and Eve" based mental models can lead the practitioner towards sin versus alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system. As Hall sets forth, a goal of Living System Ministry is to learn to identify and nurture the system's own aligned plans. These are the plans that are organically aligned with the system in which they took root. Identifying and nurturing aligned plans occurs as the Living System Ministry practitioner hears and responds to the requests of the social system.

In the "Opening Our Doors" and "Beginning Our Journey" sections of Hall's work, he highlights the freedom that comes from the internalization of Living System Ministry principles and embracing God's power to bring about his "New Creation." Hall states,

Aligning our actions to God's new creation is a high goal indeed. We start by acknowledging that we live in a fallen world. We constantly engage in a repentance-permeated life, recognizing our tendency to low-level thought and action as we lay before the church and before Christianity the highest goals possible. Though we may never achieve all that we desire, we pursue this path, because it is the path that leads to the fulfillment of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, as it is in the coming new creation.⁶

⁵ Hall, 129.

⁶ Hall, 323.

The Cat and the Toaster is a book rooted in the fact that God makes orderly, highly complex, and highly interrelated living systems. As these systems work together in proper relationship to one another, high-level goals are accomplished. A Living System Ministry interrelates physically, socially and spiritually as a total system. This dynamic yields infinite inter-relational capacity and requires complex thought. The reality of multiple numbers of interrelated causes, not a few simplistic causes and effects, leads the living system practitioner away from “one size fits all programming” and works focused mental models. The Living System Ministry practitioner understands that true vitality comes only with aligning oneself with God’s life as it flows through God’s living system. This is the foundational framework for this thesis and the work of Peaceseekers as set forth in chapter 4.

The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization by Peter Senge

In Peter Senge’s work, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*, the reader is challenged to see organizational learning as a lifelong process. He contends that one will never be able to say, “We are a learning organization,” any more than one can say, “I am an enlightened person.” These statements imply a sense of permanent excellence which simply cannot be; as we are always in a state of practicing the disciplines of learning, of getting better or getting worse.⁷

Senge introduces five disciplines: Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Building Shared Vision and Team Learning. He contends, “It is vital that the

⁷ Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency, 2006, 11.

five disciplines develop as an ensemble. This is challenging because it is much harder to integrate new tools than simply apply them separately. But the payoffs are immense.”⁸

Systems Thinking

Senge posits, “business and other human endeavors are systems bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other.”⁹ He further contends that since people are part of that intricacy, it increases our difficulty in seeing the whole pattern of change; as we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, leaving our deepest problems unaddressed. Senge presents systems thinking as a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively.¹⁰ Systems thinking has its foundation in the field of system dynamics, founded in 1956 by Jay Forrester. As an engineer, Forrester acknowledged the need for an enhanced system of testing new ideas about social systems, just as engineering principles promote a similar process. Systems thinking involves an expanded view, taking into account large quantities of or broader interactions as an issue is being studied.

Systems thinking is reflected biblically in Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17:19-23.

Just as You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And so for their sake and on their behalf I sanctify (dedicate, consecrate) Myself, that they also may be sanctified (dedicated, consecrated, made holy) in the Truth. Neither for these alone do I pray [it is not for their sake only that I make this

⁸ Senge, 11.

⁹ Senge, 7.

¹⁰ Senge, 7.

request], but also for all those who will ever come to believe in (trust in, cling to, rely on) Me through their word and teaching, That they all may be one, [just] as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe and be convinced that You have sent Me. I have given to them the glory and honor which You have given Me, that they may be one [even] as We are one: I in them and You in Me, in order that they may become one and perfectly united, that the world may know and [definitely] recognize that You sent Me and that You have loved them [even] as You have loved Me. (John 17:19-23 Amplified)

The passage illumines the interrelatedness of this complex system of the body of Christ, its relationship to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and the world. This complexity proclaims the importance of unity in the body of Christ, its impact on the world system and ultimately its witness to and declaration of Jesus Christ as the only True and Living God. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, Peaceseekers applies systems thinking to the problem of interpersonal violence in cities.

Personal Mastery

“Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively.¹¹” For Senge, personal mastery is an “essential cornerstone” of the learning organization. “The discipline of personal mastery starts with clarifying the things that really matter to us, of living our lives in the service of our highest aspirations.¹²” In the area of personal mastery, Senge highlights the connections between personal learning and organizational learning, mutually beneficial commitments between individual and organization, and the uniqueness of an endeavor comprised of learners.

¹¹ Senge, 7.

¹² Senge, 8.

Peaceseekers applies the discipline of personal mastery to discipleship ministry with survivors of murder victims. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus states,

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Discipleship in its truest sense is life to life ministry; teaching the significance of personal mastery, being conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, using ones God given gifts/talents and living out ones divine purpose within the complex systems in which we engage on the daily basis.

Mental Models

For Senge, “mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.”¹³ Mental models and their impact on our behavior are often unconscious.

According to Senge, “the discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny.”¹⁴ It also includes the ability to engage in teachable moments and learning centered dialogues, allowing ones thinking to be open to the influence of others.

Peaceseekers explores mental models with churches upholding the biblical instruction to “be transformed by the renewal of the mind.” Romans 12:2 states,

Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God,

¹³ Senge, 8.

¹⁴ Senge, 8.

even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].
(Romans 12:2 Amplified).

Clergy and congregants are challenged to examine how their organizational and personal theologies, as well as, cultural and ethnic attitudes impact the way they view the issue of violence. In doing so, individuals and ministries are challenged to see how the mental models they have individually and collectively inform how they interact with the issue.

Building Shared Vision

The practice of shared vision involves the skills of “unearthing shared “pictures of the future” that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance.¹⁵”

Mastery of this discipline requires leaders to learn the counter-productiveness of dictating a vision. Embracing a shared picture of a collectively sought after future is vital. This discipline highlights collective identity, goals and vision. Peaceseekers finds biblical significance of building shared vision in Jesus’ instruction on prayer as set forth in Matthew 6. This prayer contains the shared vision of Christians.

Pray, therefore, like this: Our Father, Who is in heaven, hallowed (kept holy) be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven (left, remitted, and let go of the debts, and have given up resentment against) our debtors. And lead (bring) us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13 Amplified)

Team Learning

For Senge, the discipline of team learning starts with “dialogue,” the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine “thinking together.”¹⁶ Dialogue also involves identification of counterproductive patterns of

¹⁵ Senge, 9.

¹⁶ Senge, 10.

interaction that chip away at learning. For example, the pattern of defensiveness can undermine learning. If this pattern is identified and addressed effectively, learning can be increased. Team learning is imperative as teams are the elementary learning entity in contemporary establishments. If teams learn, the organizational IQ increases.

In conclusion, Senge's *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* provides hope that systems marred in schism can discover a more excellent way. For Peaceseekers, the Creator sets forth this more excellent way as Senge's disciplines of systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning are all contained in scripture.¹⁷

Theology of Peace and Violence

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, the practitioner must explore a theology of peace and violence. The works reviewed in this section lend insight to the theology of peace and violence that are posited in this thesis. These foundational literature source reviews include: *The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot in the Hebrew Bible* by Mark McEntire, and *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice and Peace* by Perry Yoder.

The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot in the Hebrew Bible by Mark McEntire

This exegetical study of violence in the Hebrew Bible focuses on selected texts from Genesis through Chronicles. McEntire tracks violence through the Hebrew Canon highlighting the following path: 1.) "Violence Enters the Human Community" (Genesis 4:1-16), 2.) "God's People Oppressed by Violence" (Exodus 1:8-22), 3) "God's People

¹⁷ While Senge's five disciplines are reflected through the biblical text, they are collectively identified in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.

Liberated by Violence” (Exodus 11:1-12:39), 4.) “God’s People Acquire Land by Violence” (Joshua 6:1-27), 5.) “God’s People Become a Nation Because of Violence” (1 Samuel 4:1-22), 6.) “God’s People Divided by Violence” (1 Kings 12:1-20), and 7.) “God’s People Destroyed by Violence” (2 Chronicles 36:15-21). In doing so, he presents the tension of God’s people as perpetrators of violence, as well as, recipients of the same. He also touches upon the theological difficulties raised by some scholars who blame God (and His expectations) as the precipitator or source of violence.¹⁸

McEntire ends his journey through the theme of violence with, “The Prophetic Response to the Biblical Story.” Within this prophetic response he explores what he terms the “unrealized visions of restoration and peace.” These contentions are set forth through: 1.) “The Compassion of God” (Hosea 11:1-11), “The Restoration of God’s People” (Ezekiel 37:1-14), and “Peace on Earth” (Isaiah 11:1-9). He posits that while the hopeful vision for peace is cast, it appears that the only way to that peace is by violence. McEntire states, “The violent story of Israel refuses to be quiet, however we try to overcome it, because this story of destruction, loss, and suffering is our own.”¹⁹

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, Peaceseekers recognizes survivors as suffering members of God’s living system. However, as set forth by McEntire, we also recognize the story of destruction, loss, and suffering is our own. The McEntire text is foundational to this thesis as it helped to lay the theological groundwork of the first murder in Genesis 4, the lineage of humanity as

¹⁸ For more on this contention see Regina M. Schwartz’s, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁹ Mark McEntire, *The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot in the Hebrew Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 164.

survivors or murder victims, and the theological tension between violence and peace in the scriptures. The exploration of this tension is critical for the urban ministry practitioner.

As McEntire sets forth violence as the undercurrent of the plot of the Hebrew Bible, the text begins with the murder of Abel and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem. McEntire posits that even the prophet's hope for peace was based on violence and upholds the contention that violence permeates the Hebrew Bible. McEntire states, "The vision at the end of Hosea offers a future hope that the compassion of God can generate a world in which Israel does not suffer at the hands of other peoples. Such a world is held out as a possibility, but it is dependent on a future restoration."²⁰ While McEntire's study ends with a Hebrew Canon steeped in violence with a future hope of peace, this thesis moves from the *shalom* of the Old Testament into the *eirene* of the New Testament culminating in humanity's peace through Christ Jesus. This text and this journey provide the material for the Principles of Peace Bible Studies taught by Peaceseekers.

Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice and Peace by Perry Yoder

Yoder opens this text with a discussion of *shalom* as the center of Christian faith. He explores the broadness of the biblical *shalom* and its influence on the New Testament *eirene*. He sets forth three shades of meaning: *shalom* as material well-being and prosperity, *shalom* as justice, and *shalom* as straightforwardness.

Shalom as material well-being and prosperity is framed positively, in the sense that things or people are as they ought to be versus an absence of something. "In this light, peacemaking as *shalom* making is striving so that those who do not now enjoy

²⁰ McEntire, 164.

material shalom and physical well-being can do so.”²¹ Shalom as material well-being and prosperity heralds shalom as “a state of well-being, an all rightness, an okayness.”²²

Shalom as justice is working for just and health-giving relationships between people and nations and characterizes all relationships between God and people. Shalom as straightforwardness speaks to the moral and ethical use of shalom as the opposite of deceit. “In this sphere we can say that shalom making is working to remove deceit and hypocrisy and to promote honesty, integrity, and straightforwardness.”²³

A basic assumption of this book is that at the core of biblical faith are central beliefs about God, the world, and humankind. These convictions are connected to each other and work together in synergy. In proposing this Yoder states, “This means to understand any one of them properly, it is necessary to see how it is linked to other core beliefs and how it is to be understood in light of these connections.”²⁴ This concept speaks to the significance of mental models and the complex, interrelated reality reflected in the biblical shalom.

The major thesis of the book is that shalom is against injustice and oppression and demands a transforming of unjust social and economic systems. Yoder challenges the limited perspective that views this peace as solely addressed to victims, but heralds shalom as acting against oppressors for the sake of victims. Biblical shalom casts the vision of what ought to be and calls society towards transformation. He posits that the

²¹ Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace*. (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1987), 13.

²² Yoder, 12.

²³ Yoder, 16.

²⁴ Yoder, 7.

first contrast is between shalom and injustice, not shalom and violence, as it is the “violence of injustice which is a major block to the coming of shalom.”²⁵ The manner in which the author addresses this view of shalom is foundational to Peaceseekers Principles of Peace bible studies, as justice is set forth as a principle of peace. The continuity in which the shades of meaning of shalom are presented by Yoder are central to the development of the living system theology of this thesis. Yoder plainly sets forth the mission of the church as announcing good news that in Jesus, there is shalom.

Theology from Below

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, this thesis explores theology from above and below. Theology from above and below speaks of the use of Scripture in doing theology. When theologizing from above, one begins with the Biblical text. When theologizing from below, one begins with a specific issue and looks to the biblical text for scriptures to address the issue.

The texts in this section explore the urban church, the dynamics of the city, its people, its issues and look toward the scripture for insight and strategy. The works reviewed in this section are foundational to the ideas posited in this thesis. These foundational literature source reviews include: *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* by Eldin Villafañe, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* by Mark Gornik, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* by Robert Linthicum, *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban*

²⁵ Yoder, 5.

Mission by Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, and *Beyond Cheap Grace* by Eldin Villafañe.

Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry by Eldin Villafañe

Eldin Villafañe's, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry*, exhorts the church to Kingdom ministry in the city. The book is divided into three parts: Urban Socio-Theology, Urban Ministry, and Urban Theological Education.

Part One: Urban Socio-Theology

Villafañe contends that there is no greater need for 21st century evangelicals in the cities, than to articulate, in both word and deed a social spirituality. He states, “the twin phenomena of urbanization and globalization, which define the ethos of our great cities, demand no more and no less than an authentically biblical spirituality. If the whole church is to take the whole gospel to the whole world, it must have a wholistic spirituality.”²⁶ In Peaceseekers’ work with survivors of murder victims, this is a dominant theme. Survivors articulate the need for the church to walk with them in the social, physical, political and spiritual challenges that are encountered following the traumatic death of a loved one. They yearn for an authentically biblical spirituality that does not end at the church doors but travels holistically into their lives, into the city, and into the many nations that they represent.

Part Two: Urban Ministry

The words of the prophet in Jeremiah 29:7: “And seek the peace (Shalom) of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace (Shalom) you will have peace (Shalom),” provide an inspirational foundation

²⁶ Eldin Villafañe. *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 12.

for Villafañe's discourse on urban ministry; he calls it "the Jeremiah Paradigm for the City." This paradigm provides an overarching, holistic vision for the city, one that can inspire our work in urban ministry.²⁷ Villafañe posits that the Jeremiah paradigm stems from a theology of context (presence), a theology of mission (peace) and a theology of spirituality (prayer). The Jeremiah paradigm calls the people of God to be present as salt and light in the affairs of the city; to seek the shalom (wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, reconciliation, justice, welfare) of the city - both personal and social; and to nurture caring of the soul through prayer, equipped with the whole armor of God to confront spiritual wickedness, powers and principalities. The Jeremiah paradigm is central to this thesis' theology of urban ministry. The Jeremiah 29:7 text governs the mission and vision of the ministry of Peaceseekers.

Part Three: Urban Theological Education

In discussing urban theological education, Villafañe presents six essential elements or six "C's" for effective seminary-based urban theological education programs. The six elements are: constituency, contextualization, curriculum, community, coexistence with the host seminary, and cost. There are three other authors within this section, including Douglas Hall, Efraín Agosto and Bruce W. Jackson. These authors provide complementary contentions for Villafañe's essential elements.

There are two principles presented by Douglas Hall that are important for this thesis. Firstly, urban complexity requires that pastors be "trained in the basics of socio-cultural systems, and that they fit into a ministry that seeks to be effective over the long

²⁷ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 2.

run.”²⁸ Secondly, “urban heterogeneity requires that cross-cultural training be a central concern in all legitimate urban training programs.”²⁹ Hall states, “an absolute need is that those who plan to minister to another culture must positively care about those people, be able to have effective communication with them, and understand how they perceive their own needs before even attempting to think about relevant ministry to them.”³⁰ This is a process that remains all too often ignored in the 21st century. Peaceseekers employs both of these concepts presented by Douglas Hall with the training philosophy of its leadership and chaplaincy partners.

In conclusion, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* provides hope and critical insight for urban ministry in a postmodern world. Villafañe’s experience and insights lend significantly to the theological groundwork of this thesis.

To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City by Mark Gornik

Mark Gornik’s *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* provides critical insight into Christians working as ministers of reconciliation and agents of the Kingdom of God. These themes are reflected within the complexity of Living Systems Ministry and Mission, displaying the infinite capacity to interrelate on many levels and the reality that subsystems are best understood in their broader context.

Chapter 1: Excluded Neighborhoods

In this chapter, Gornik explores the concept of systemic sin and the powers that be. He introduces the idea of structural forces contributing to "inner-city dislocations." He does this through a historical analysis of Baltimore's Sandtown neighborhood and the

²⁸ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 99.

²⁹ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 99.

³⁰ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 100.

impact of America's "original sin" of slavery. Gornik sets forth Christians as God's instruments used to shine the light on systemic sin, seeking health through complex relationships, bringing the Kingdom to earth. This concept is central for this thesis and highly reflective of the multi-faceted, interrelated reality of Living Systems Ministry. Acknowledging this complexity, Gornik's premises support the idea that structural sin and injustice can actually cause unintended effects in other parts of the system

Chapter 2: A Church of the Streets

In this chapter, Gornik explores the concept of incarnational ministry, as the true purpose of a Christian congregation. The church is challenged not only to preach the good news but to be the good news, exploring the church as a good neighbor/gospel neighbor in one's community. Gornik examines the church as a community of grace, welcome, reconciliation and sharing. He discusses the "now and not yet" of the Kingdom of God. He cautions the Christian community from imposing her own visions on the church and also notes the danger of idealizing community. Gornik highlights the importance of God's divine ideal, yet notes the significance of grace that is contained therein.

Chapter 3: The Things that Make for Peace

In this chapter, Gornik presents a framework for living for God's Shalom in the inner city. Facing the challenges of a global inner city means embracing God's command to seek the peace of the city as set forth in Jeremiah 29:7. Understanding the depths of this command requires that we acknowledge the holistic and vast nature of shalom.

Gornik states,

To be peacemakers in the American inner city is the opposite of giving in to apathy, of razing neighborhoods, of imploding buildings, of excluding the poor,

of insulating oneself from risk. To seek the peace of the city is to have a vision of friendship and community and a commitment to justice, joy, forgiveness and salvation.³¹

This principle as discussed by Gornik is central to the ministry of Peaceseekers, as well as, the theology of shalom contained in this discourse.

Chapter 4: Out of the Ruins

In this chapter Gornik offers a process of community organizing as a basis for empowerment. Exploring the book of Nehemiah, he finds a framework for cultural transformation and the Spirit's role in creating new communities. Reflecting on the church's role in rebuilding distressed urban communities, there is hope and direction in God's word. Gornik states, "Rooted in the resurrection of Christ and in active hope of God's future, rebuilding is based on the belief that new communities out of the ruins are possible."³² The skill of community organizing and belief that God can bring life from the ruins are key to the church's role as agents of the kingdom and ministers of reconciliation.

Chapter 5: Singing a New Song

In this chapter Gornik tells the story of New Song Community Church in Sandtown; a story that shows how seeking the peace of the city flows out of the heart of a church that is bonded to its community. The New Song Community Church provides a beautiful testimony of a community that allowed God to use them as an Isaiah 61 example of "rebuilding the waste cities." Gornik states,

How did a dream for a renewed and more just community become a

³¹ Mark Gornik, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 126.

³² Gornik, 162.

reality? Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the Spirit of life brought it about - one person, one family, one house, and one block at a time. It's the story of the loaves and the fishes all over again, the Lord exponentially blessing one house and the commitment of a few to a new life made possible by the widening space for life created by the Spirit.³³

This slow, almost imperceptible process mentioned by Gornik speaks to the "Quiet Revival" attributed to Boston ministries as documented by the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston, Massachusetts.³⁴ This assists the practitioner with internalization of Living System Ministry principles as it provides evidence of vitality resulting from God's life as it flows through his living system. This chapter sheds light on the importance of the high order question, "How does the job get done?" Versus the more common low-order question, "How do I do the job?"

Chapter 6: The Future of the Inner City

In this chapter, Gornik looks at trends, developments, and God's promised urban future. Gornik states,

The church lives, risks, and builds on the resurrection love, faith, and hope that it professes and has been given in Christ by the Spirit. By the Spirit of God, the body of Christ knows that even as suffering and violence may grip our cities a new future of peace for the cities of the world has begun. In faith, in the way of Jesus, and in confidence of God's future, the church in the inner city yearns for, enacts, and tells the story of Jesus, the one who so loved the inner city that he died for it and will come again to reconcile all things.³⁵

In conclusion, *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* has contributed significantly to the theology and praxis contained within this thesis. This work has informed Peaceseekers' understanding of God's shalom in its work with

³³ Gornik, 181.

³⁴ This slow, imperceptible dynamic of vitality is discussed by Douglas Hall in, *The Cat and the Toaster*. This manifestation of vitality speaks to the living system ministry practitioner's partnership with God as his life flows through his living system. Hall addresses the dynamic of Boston's Quiet Revival on pages xiii – xv.

³⁵ Gornik, 236.

grassroots Christian congregations and ministries.

City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church by Robert Linthicum

Robert C. Linthicum's, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church*, explores the mission of the church in the city, within the framework of a battleground between good and evil. The work contains thirteen chapters divided into three major parts: 1) The City: Battleground, 2) The Church: God's Urban Advance, and 3) Spiritual Disciplines: Power for Ministry.

Part 1: The City: Battleground

In Part One, Linthicum presents the city as a battleground between God and Satan. He challenges the church to embrace its call to the city acknowledging that our world is inevitably and irreversibly becoming an urban world. He emphatically states, "Only our Lord's return or humanity's destruction of itself in a mushroom cloud will prevent the urbanization of the world."³⁶ He also posits that the bible should be viewed as an urban book. Linthicum states,

It is hard for us to appreciate that the world of Moses and David and Daniel and Jesus was an urban world. But it was – their world was probably more urban than any civilization before it or any after it for the next fifteen hundred years. The world in which the Bible was written was dominated by its cities. By 2000 B.C.E., Abraham's city of Ur numbered 250,000. Ancient Nineveh was so large that it took three days to cross it on foot (Jonah 3:3). Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar was an amazing city with eleven miles of walls and a water and irrigation system (perhaps even including flush toilets) not equaled again until the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷

³⁶ Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 19.

³⁷ Linthicum, 21.

For Linthicum, with the reality of God's call of the church to the city, the city being a battleground between God and Satan, and viewing the bible as an urban book, the Christian is compelled to ask, "How does Scripture view my city?" The overarching message is that the world is a battlefield but one can legitimately posit that the greatest battle goes on inside our cities.

Part 2: The Church: God's Urban Advance

In part two, Linthicum contends that the death of Jesus Christ is the ground on which the church builds its faith and practice in the city. He posits,

Jesus came to the city to die for the city, its systems, and its people. Christ asks us to participate in what he has done. We are to take up our cross and follow Him into the city – there to be willing to minister, to suffer and, if need be, to lose our lives.³⁸

This tough and humbling challenge for the urban minister, becomes real when nurturing Living System Ministry And Mission with individuals, families and communities impacted by homicide. Linthicum highlights the importance of prayer. He notes five areas regarding the church's prayer for the city. Based in Psalm 122, they are: 1) Pray for the City's Economic Health, 2) Pray for the Safety of the City, 3) Pray for the Political Order, 4) Pray for the People, and 5) Pray with Importunity. According to Linthicum, it is our vigilant prayer in these areas that must undergird our practice.

Part 3: Spiritual Disciplines: Power for Ministry

In part three, Linthicum presents spiritual disciplines as the source of power to sustain city ministry. He discusses personal spiritual formation, participation in community, maintenance of a vision, and faithfulness rather than search for success. Linthicum states,

³⁸ Linthicum, 127.

God's call to you and me, as city Christians and as part of God's church in the city, is to be faithful – faithful to ourselves, faithful to our brother and sister Christians, faithful to our city's body of Christ, faithful to the poor, the powerless, and the lost of our city – and thus, faithful to God.³⁹

And what does it mean to be faithful? Linthicum shares the words of an old pastor that had given him advice after making many mistakes in urban ministry. The advice – “Just keep on keeping on!” In Conclusion, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* provides foundational insights for the development of this thesis.

God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission by Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma

God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission, explores the importance of contextually appropriate theological themes, and development of a methodology for doing theology of mission in the city. The stories shared by the twelve authors within this text explore their international experiences towards the development of a theology of urban ministry. The book is divided into four parts: 1) Approaching the City, 2) Reflecting on the City, 3) Being Present in the City, and 4) Seeking a Theology of Mission for the City.

Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma provide detailed reflections on how the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King verdict impacted their hermeneutic, bringing it from reflecting not only the individual doing the writing but also the rest of the community. Each author's experience brings them to the place of asking, “What then is the missional role of the church in the city?” The observations of Lesslie Newbigin were highlighted in contemplating this question, He states,

³⁹ Linthicum, 314.

The answers to great questions are not obvious. They are not shouted at us, or written up in the sky. We cannot find them by buying an examination guide in a bazaar. We have to take risks if we are to understand the really important things. We have to look, to listen, to ponder, to reflect, to experiment and to ultimately take risks – to risk our very selves. The answers to great questions have to be struggled for.⁴⁰

Part One: Approaching The City

The three authors presented in Part One wrote from the perspective of approaching the city. Jude Tiersma deals with the question, “what does it mean to be incarnational when we are not the Messiah?” In exploring this question he focused on the meaning and model of incarnational ministry through the context of the Delores Mission in East Los Angeles. Tiersma highlights Christ as our blueprint for incarnational ministry within the framework of his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Tiersma reflects on dangers the incarnational minister must keep in mind in order to avoid pitfalls. “Although we are called to follow Jesus, we are not the Messiah, and Jesus did not call us to be messianic.”⁴¹

Tiersma posits, “as urban workers we participate in what God is doing. We do not bring God’s reign into the city. God is already there. He invites us to join Him in His activity. In humility we must realize that we will never have all the answers. We cannot meet all the needs. We are not the answer. The ministry belongs to God, not to us.”⁴²

Part Two: Reflecting On The City

The four authors presented in Part Two wrote from the perspective of reflecting on the city. Mary Thiessen dealt with the topic, “When we are dying in the city: three

⁴⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *Journey into Joy* (Madras: Diocesan Press, 1972), 4.

⁴¹ Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma. 11.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

sources of life.” This piece calls the urban ministry practitioner back to life when the oppressive structures in the urban environment have sucked the life and vitality from them. Thiessen focuses on three life giving processes: 1) Focus on how the Holy Spirit breathes life into suffocating cities, 2) Reflect deliberately on and intentionally recollect God’s mission, 3) Look for God’s unexpected interventions. Thiessen highlights that often God brings life to urban churches, communities, and individuals through the redemptive use of crises. She develops the idea that God intervenes so He can redeem and crises provide the opportunity to act redemptively.

Part Three: Being Present In The City

The three authors presented in Part Three wrote from the perspective of being present in the city. The reflections in this section included: *Nairobi and Naomi: Immigration into the city* by Stanley Mutuku Mutunga; *Toward redefining urban poverty* by Jayakumar Christian; and *A common ministry, a communal vocation* by Christine Accornero. These reflections highlight issues of immigration, poverty, and inclusiveness as significant to the work of the urban ministry practitioner.

Part Four: Seeking A Theology Of Mission For The City

This section of the book concentrated on constructing a theology of mission for the city. Van Engen describes theology of mission as a multi- and interdisciplinary enterprise having to do with three arenas. He states, “we apply biblical and theological presuppositions and values: 1) To the enterprise of church’s ministry and mission, and 2) Set them in the context of specific activities carried out in particular times and places.”⁴³ Van Engen illustrates the tripartite nature of theology of mission with three interlocking

⁴³ Van Engen and Tiersma, 265.

circles: Biblical Text, Urban Context and Faith Community. This concept is incorporated within the theology section of this thesis.

The authors also discuss James Vigil's theory on double marginality, the themes of race and class and how that plays into the issue of violence in the city. These themes are also discussed in this thesis. In conclusion, *God so loves the city* is a foundational work contributing to this author's theology of mission.

Beyond Cheap Grace by Eldin Villafañe

Eldin Villafañe's *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* challenges the American church, theological education and Christian leadership to move beyond cheap grace to a Christ-centered mindset and lifestyle of self-emptying and costly discipleship. The book includes theological responses to Villafañe's discourse from Richard Peace, Juan Francisco Martinez and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. These theologians largely concur with Eldin Villafañe's work and comment on some areas of expansion that build upon his theology.

The Christian Mind-set and Postmodernity: Lessons from Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Villafañe contends that postmodernity demands that Christians live a cruciform life in favor of the redemption of the world.⁴⁴ This lifestyle arises from a Christian mindset or *phronesis* that yields a self-emptying or *kenosis*. In other words, a mind transformed by Christ yields transformed behavior that transforms what it interacts with. This concept is key in nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims. The murder of a loved one and the resulting trauma can deeply impact

⁴⁴ Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 5.

an individual's worldview and/or thought life. While this is the case at the individual level, there is also the convergence of multiple interrelated variables following the murder of a loved one. Engaging in Living Systems Ministry requires the realization of the complexity and interrelatedness physically, socially and spiritually as a total system. This compels the urban church to examine her "Adam and Eve mental models" and undergo a *kenosis* by means of *phronesis*.

"El Verbo fue Hecho Carne": The Incarnation and Theological Education

The profound words of John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" provide the foundation for this discussion. Villafañe highlights the significance of the incarnation as a frame of reference for theological education. He states, "The incarnation as a reality, symbol, or principle should inform the mission and task of theological education and, thus, the relationship that theological education has with the church, the academy, and the society."⁴⁵ It is critical that theological education be reminded to humbly express an "urban kenosis," emptying itself of the prerogatives of power and prestige, and pitching its tent among the poor and marginalized communities in or cities.⁴⁶ In the spirit of Jeremiah 29:7, Peaceseekers equips congregations to have an incarnational presence in the lives of survivors of murder victims, as well as the cities in which they live, work, play and worship. In Living System Ministry complexity equals health. When theological education fails to be incarnational in its practice it becomes simplistic and sick. Peaceseekers prioritizes partnerships with theological

⁴⁵ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 32.

⁴⁶ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 36.

education and community-based entities as an incarnational witness and striving towards higher order and redemptive learning processes.

Amos, Intrepid Leader for Justice: Three Indispensable Qualities of a Minister of the Word of God

Villafañe contends that a contextualized understanding and application of an incarnational theology requires intrepid, courageous leaders. As informed by the prophet Amos, the character of these leaders must contain at least three indispensable qualities of a minister of the Word of God including: 1) a strong sense of God's calling, 2) a sure word from God, 3) a singular courage from God. These qualities are needed to address the issues of social justice and spiritual transformation that lead us beyond cheap grace. As set forth by Villafañe, intrepid leaders for justice understand that justice ultimately is rooted in the righteousness of God. Justice is grounded in God's holiness and moral character – in God's very being. Our God is just and righteous in God's self and therefore faithful to God's self (as a triune God) and faithful to the demands of God's relationship with all creation. As the psalmist reminds us, "righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne" (Psalm 89:14), and "For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice" (Psalm 11:7). Our God is a just God, a faithful God who keeps God's promises. Our God is a God who loves justice – a God who demands justice of all!⁴⁷

In conclusion, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice*, calls the church to radical incarnational discipleship with a theological education that bridges the gap between theory and practice, spiritual and social, equipping intrepid leaders in the spirit of the prophet Amos. This journey is not easy but it is indeed divine. In the words of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Yahweh invites the people to

⁴⁷ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 67.

participate in the coming of the time of peace and justice, even though that entails radical divine intervention.⁴⁸

Violence and Public Health

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church can learn a great deal from the discipline of public health. Public Health refers to the science of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging life among the population as a whole.⁴⁹ Peaceseekers uses a biblically-based public health informed approach in its ministry. The works reviewed in this section lend insight to violence as a public health issue. These foundational literature source reviews include: *Murder is No Accident: Understanding and Preventing Youth Violence in America* by Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak, and *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being* by Larry Cohen, Vivian Chavez and Sana Chehimi. *Murder is No Accident: Understanding and Preventing Youth Violence in America* by Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak

Murder is No Accident: Understanding and Preventing Youth Violence in America explores youth violence as a preventable public health issue. Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Howard Spivak highlight their work in the nation's cities with particular attention to Boston, Massachusetts. They discuss Boston's success with creating an interdisciplinary citywide movement including educators, clergy, community leaders, police officers, emergency room workers, activist, survivors of homicide victims, youth and many others. The authors, two of the foremost public health experts in the

⁴⁸ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 88.

⁴⁹ CEA Winslow, "The Untilled Fields of Public Health." *Science* 1920, no.51 (1306): 23-33.

United States, present this work in four parts: 1) The Problem, 2) Issues and Solutions, 3) What Happened in Boston, 4) Lessons Learned.

The Problem

In framing the discussion, this work is grounded in the assumption that violence is preventable. Prothrow-Stith and Spivak posit,

If you assume that violence is inevitable then rather than try to prevent it you are left only with the option of trying to respond aggressively when it occurs, as many U.S. institutions do. The aggressive response is usually some form of severe punishment. Actual prevention isn't a priority unless you believe violence is preventable. Our information shows that violence is: 1) Not inevitable and 2) Eminently preventable.⁵⁰

The authors also challenge the following five common assumptions about the best way to approach a problem like violence.

1. *"Communities need prescriptive solutions to their problems.* On the contrary, we believe that communities need information from which they can create the approaches that fit into their community context.
2. *Limited time and resources are best used replicating a single program or "best practices," rather than developing an understanding of the problem and devising strategies that reflect the community culture and available resources.* On the contrary, communities can learn and perhaps borrow strategies from other programs but each community must determine what works best in its context.
3. *Problems that evolve over a long period of time can be solved in three to five years (that is, within the typical time frame of a public sector or private foundation grant).* In fact, almost all success stories in public health have required decades and multiple strategies.
4. *Complex problems can be solved with a single program.* Complex problems require multifaceted approaches that grow out of an understanding of the various components of the problem.

⁵⁰ Prothrow-Stith and Spivak, 3.

5. *Mean-spirited and punitive after-the-fact strategies, such as “zero tolerance” policies, are effective prevention approaches. There is no evidence that this is the case.”*⁵¹

This area goes on to discuss youth violence as an epidemic to which everyone is vulnerable. They track the epidemic through various communities highlighting three waves including: poor communities in cities of more than five hundred thousand (mostly males), small towns, rural and suburban communities, and an increase in girls perpetrating violent crime. They also highlight risk factors for violence including: poverty, witnessing violence, victimization, alcohol and other drug use, and availability of guns. They also share their personal and professional experiences that impact their work in violence prevention, highlighting the inspiration they receive from survivors of violence.

Issues and Solutions

In this section, Prothrow-Stith and Spivak highlight the importance of understanding violence and its characteristics as foundational to prevention practitioners. They share useful data and pertinent information that is key for informed praxis. They discuss the escalation of juvenile homicide, the dominance of male perpetrators and victims, biological and genetic risk factors, surveillance systems used to track data, cycles of violence, risk and resiliency factors and an examination of various strategies. They also underscore the significant role of firearms and the media.

What Happened in Boston

In this section, Prothrow-Stith and Spivak discuss the phenomena known as “the Boston Miracle,” “the Boston Model,” and “the Boston Strategy.” This refers to an approximately two year time frame in the nineties when Boston had no gun-related

⁵¹ Prothrow-Stith and Spivak, 4-5.

juvenile homicides. In 1996, President Clinton and Attorney General Reno came to Boston to celebrate the exciting development that was countering a trend occurring in most of the rest of the country. The answer to the question, “What caused this notable decrease?” is answered in many ways depending on who you ask. Prothrow-Stith and Spivak credit a multi-faceted, interrelated process over time. They contend,

The Boston story is really about thousands of people who stepped up to the challenge. It’s fascinating to think back and consider how this all came to be. The early pioneers of this movement were heroes and risk takers from many places, people willing to question the status quo and see things in a different way. Some seasoned participants came from expected sites like the criminal justice system, people who were trained and paid to deal with the problems of violence. Pioneers came from the fields of health and mental health, having seen and dealt with those who suffered the consequences of violent injury. Risk takers came from public health, bringing the statistics on lost lives and disabilities. Unexpected heroes came from among people in the religious sector, the families of victims, survivors, teachers and other educators, coaches and frontline workers in youth programs, community residents from some of the poorest and most vulnerable neighborhoods, and the youth themselves. These early heroes had several things in common. They saw violence as preventable, not inevitable. They were willing to take chances even when faced with rejection, ridicule, and an overwhelming problem. They were creative and flexible, not accepting of doing things the same old way with the same nonresults. They brought commitment and caring beyond their own immediate needs. They remained optimistic. They had faith in young people, even those that appeared lost and unreachable. And they were in it for the long haul.⁵²

Lessons Learned

The authors cite many lessons learned from their personal and professional experiences. In view of this discourse, the following are highlighted: 1) Complex problems demand multifaceted solutions, 2) Survivors are central to the violence prevention movement, 3) The system is part of the problem, but it can be and needs to be part of the solution, and 4) Forgiveness for our children and ourselves is crucial. These

⁵² Prothrow-Stith and Spivak, 165-166.

systems principles are important to nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church.

Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being by Larry Cohen, Vivian Chavez and Sana Chehimi

In *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being*, Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, present approaches for building health and equity in communities. The book includes models and theories for practicing primary prevention and addressing health disparities. The work includes contributions from noted experts in the field of prevention; providing insight and practical applications of health promotion efforts. The authors provide an overarching framework and principles guiding prevention efforts. The book presents this information in three parts: Defining the Issues, Key Elements of Effective Prevention Efforts, and Prevention in Context.

Defining the Issues

In this section the authors begin with a discussion of what primary prevention is and is not. They also present the overarching framework and principles that guide effective prevention efforts. The authors highlight that while the focus is on prevention, the work is equally about social justice, establishing the importance of addressing the factors that cause unnecessary illness, injury, and death. A prevention-oriented approach to health and well-being is needed to help eliminate the injustice of the greatest impact of illness and injury falling on disfranchised populations. In emphasizing a comprehensive and effective approach, the authors present the “spectrum of prevention” – a framework for putting primary prevention into practice. The spectrum of prevention includes: Strengthening individual knowledge and skills, Promoting community education, Educating Providers, Fostering coalitions and networks, Changing Organizational

practices and Influencing policy and legislation. The spectrum of prevention can be a powerful tool for prevention as it is helpful in designing efforts that change norms. The spectrum of prevention is a tool utilized by Peaceseekers as it endeavors to nurture Living System Ministry with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church.

Public health prevention efforts that have used this process to change social norms include campaigns aimed at, smoking, lead and seat belts. These examples herald the case for prevention. Prevention works but it takes a movement to make prevention primary.

The authors posit,

Former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher (2006) once explained, “There is still a big gap between what we know and what we do, and that gap is lethal. When it comes to the health of our communities, we must never be guilty of low aim.” We cannot afford to aim low because our own well-being and that of our friends, families, and communities is at stake. We are getting seriously injured and ill unnecessarily far too often. When seeking care to address these ills, we are not served optimally by the health care system. This is especially the case for those most in need, but increasingly for all of us, the system does not perform adequately.⁵³

Key Elements of Effective Prevention Efforts

This section notes the continuum of prevention, implementation and practice, as well as engagement in interdisciplinary collaboration towards the evaluation of primary prevention efforts.

Prevention in Context

This section explores the relevance of prevention efforts to a broad array of current health and social concerns and illustrates contemporary accomplishments and the potential intrinsic to prevention practice.

In conclusion, *Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Well-Being*, is a reader towards bridging the gap between public health theory and practice. As a

⁵³ Cohen, Chavez and Chehimi, 19-20.

biblically-based public health informed ministry, Peaceseekers utilizes these principles in its Living System Ministry and Mission.

Diversity and Discipleship

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church can benefit from strengthening her cultural and discipleship competencies. The works reviewed in this section lend insight to potential barriers to Living System Ministry and Mission. The foundational literature source reviews include: *Privilege, Power and Difference* by Allan G. Johnson, and *The Adventure of Discipling Others* by Ron Bennett and John Purvis.

Privilege, Power and Difference by Allan G. Johnson

In *Privilege, Power and Difference*, Allan G. Johnson challenges the reader to think critically about the system of privilege, oppression and inequality. The text is presented in ten chapters, traveling from identification of the problem to solution building. He explores the historical roots of modern racism and other “isms,” highlighting the trouble the United States is in due to the existence of these disparities. The author discusses how these dynamics pit groups against each other, accentuating the role of “capitalism, class, and the matrix of domination.”⁵⁴ Johnson provides tools for “getting off the hook” of denial and resistance, as well as becoming a part of the solution. The author connects theory with practice and shares how his own personal and professional experiences inform his perspective. He moves the reader to deal with the consequences of privilege and their connection to it. Johnson’s text is a valuable resource for the urban church as she cultivates Living System Ministry and Mission with

⁵⁴ Allen G. Johnson, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 52.

survivors of homicide victims. The themes of privilege, power and difference are a significant thread in Peaceseekers' ministry and mission of seeking the shalom of the city. Shedding light on issues of power and privilege helps to address potential pitfalls for the Living System Ministry practitioner while acknowledging the importance of addressing injustice in the system.

The Adventure of Discipling Others by Ron Bennett and John Purvis

In *The Adventure of Discipling Others*, Ron Bennett and John Purvis provide a resource for equipping disciples to disciple others. The goal of the text is to strengthen Kingdom laborers in the development of spiritual generations through a life-to-life ministry of discipling. The text is presented in three modules of four sessions each. The authors take the reader on a journey from understanding the blueprint of discipling to intentional discipling.

Bennett and Purvis stress the importance of developing disciplers committed to an ongoing spiritual lineage that can reach the world, upholding the importance of an ongoing spiritual chain. During the training sessions in this book, new disciplers are encouraged to maintain three discipleship life skills: devotional time, Scripture memory, and outreach. The idea is that each discipler will experience the process that they will be ushering others through. Bennett and Purvis stress that discipling others isn't a classroom skill, disciplers must combine knowledge with actual experiences of ministering to others. They underscore the importance of disciplers committing at least one year to an on-the-job learning process. This means they have or find the freedom in their schedule and responsibilities to give their time and attention to investing in at least one person.

Chaplains serving with Peaceseekers are cultivated as learner/systems thinkers who demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in and through their relationship with Christ and others. Training in the art of life to life discipling is key in nurturing Living System Ministry with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church.

In conclusion, the foundational literature sources reviewed in this chapter provide significant insights shaping the theology and praxis contained in this thesis. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, these sources incorporate biblical truths from various disciplines. The literature reflected in this review incorporates Complex Systems, Theology of Peace and Violence, Theology from Below, Violence and Public Health, and Diversity and Discipleship in pursuit of a living system theology with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church. Now that we've reviewed the literature, let us take a look at the theological framework.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, Courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time, Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it, Trusting that You will make all things right, If I surrender to Your will, So that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You in the next. Amen¹

The aforementioned prayer, attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, has been adopted by many who find their journeys within the humbling power of its text. Regarded as a prophetic theologian and ethicist, Niebuhr upheld that freedom existed with the admittance of sin as endemic to the human condition. It was in this confession that man could acknowledge his tendency towards prideful rationalizations and lack of appreciation for the complexities through which injustice is propagated.

In exploration of a Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, one must wrestle with the legitimacy of Niebuhr's contentions and unpack the theology that informs them. It is from the theology of the Living System Ministry practitioner that praxis is birthed. Foundational to the theology of the Living System Ministry practitioner is the reality of humanity's fallenness, the necessity of a redemptive method of ministry, and the centrality of God's shalom. This chapter will explore a holistic living system theology of urban ministry and mission, rooted in the biblical shalom, framed by a theology of mission (peace), theology of context (presence/place), and theology of spirituality (prayer). The chapter will also set forth three potential barriers to living system ministry and mission with survivors of

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr and Robert McAfee Brown. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 251.

homicide victims in U.S. cities, while positing the L.I.V.E. acronym in summation of the chapter's precepts.

Theology of Shalom

The theological basis of this treatise is rooted in the biblical concept of shalom. In *Shalom: The Peaceable City*, Jack Stotts advocated shalom as the primary ethical norm, instead of agape. His presupposition is that shalom is preferable both on the basis of biblical and theological criteria and on the ground of adequacy for the contemporary society.² This premise is evident in the work of Peaceseekers, as seven guiding principles of peace are used to help people explore the intricacies of shalom. These principles will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

The English word "peace" does not do justice to the fullness of meaning contained in shalom. In English, the word *peace* normally brings to mind a state of serenity or the absence of conflict. The biblical notion of peace carries a broader meaning embedded in the Old Testament "Hebrew root *slm*, which means "to be complete" or "to be sound."³ In addition, the verb connotes *to be complete or whole* or *to live well (individual and communal)*.⁴ The Old Testament Peace is a state of "wholeness possessed by persons or groups, which may be health, prosperity, security, or the spiritual completeness of covenant."⁵ Though there are many shades of meaning in *shalom*, they can be grouped into four categories: "(1) *shalom* as wholeness of life or

² Jack Stotts, *Shalom: The Search for a Peaceable City* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1973), 7.

³ CL Feinberg, "Peace," in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Walter Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 833.

⁴ *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 833.

⁵ *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 833.

body (1 Samuel 25:6; Deuteronomy 23:6; Isaiah 38:17); (2) *shalom* as right relationship or harmony between two parties or people, often established by a covenant (Numbers 25:12-13; Isaiah 54:10; Ezekiel 34:25-26) and, when related to Yahweh, the covenant was renewed or maintained with a *peace offering*; (3) *shalom* as prosperity, success, or fulfillment (Leviticus 26:3-9; 1 Chronicles 4:40; Psalms 37:11; Isaiah 54:13); and (4) *shalom* as victory over one's enemies or absence of war (Judges 11:13; 1 Kings 2:5; Psalms 35:20; Proverbs 16:7; Jeremiah 12:12; Isaiah 9:6f). *Shalom* was used in both greetings and farewells. It was meant to act as a blessing on the one to whom it was spoken (Judges 19:20; 1 Samuel 25:6; Daniel 10:19; 1 Chronicles 1:18).⁶

In the New Testament, the Greek word *eirene* is the word most often translated by the word *peace*. Although there is some overlap in their meanings, the Hebrew word *shalom* is broader in its usage, and, in fact, has greatly influenced the New Testament's use of *eirene*. *Eirene* and its derivatives express *the ideas of peace, well being, rest, reconciliation with God, and salvation in the fullest sense*.⁷ In classical Greek *eirene* primarily signified “*the absence of conflict, the antithesis to war; it could also connote the conditions resulting from the cessation of war, or the condition of law and order that results in the blessings of prosperity for land and people*.”⁸ Due to the Old Testament influence of *shalom*, there are also several shades of meaning in *eirene*, they can be grouped into three categories: 1) *eirene* as opposed to war or strife, including right relationship with ones fellow man (Luke 14:32; Acts 12:20; Ephesians 2:14-17; 1

⁶ EM Good, “Peace in the Old Testament” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible Vol. 3*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 704-706.

⁷ CL Mitton, “Peace in the New Testament in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible Vol. 3*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 706.

⁸ *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 706.

Corinthians 7:15; Romans 14:19; Hebrews 12:14); 2) *eirene* as restoration of right relationship between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:20-22; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:15); and 3) *eirene* as peace of mind or serenity (Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17; Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15; John 14:27). As with *shalom*, *eirene* was used in both greetings and farewells. In these greetings, the peace which is offered comes from God (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Revelations 1:4). With that being the case, let us now explore the God of Peace.

Rooted within the Old Testament we find the concept of God as the giver of peace in its totality (Leviticus 26:6; 1 Chronicles 12:18; Job 22:21; Psalms 4:8; Proverbs 3:17). The prophets shed light on this fact in their proclamations of God Himself as the source of true peace (Isaiah 26:12; Nahum 1:15; Ezekiel 34:25; Zechariah 6:13; Malachi 2:5). This concept is picked up in the New Testament with the terminology *the peace of God* (Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15). If we understand that God is the source of peace, we can then deduce that God Himself is the *God of Peace* (Romans 15:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; Hebrews 13:20). It is from the God of Peace that peace comes to man. In John 14:27, peace is the gift of Christ. Without a righteous life made possible by God's help, no one is able to find peace (Isaiah 48:22, 59:8).

The Peace of God has clear salvific quality as it proceeds from the God of Peace. We are justified through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1), the mediator of Peace (Colossians 1:20). "The good news of salvation, which is called "the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15) because it reconciles believers to God and to one another (Ephesians 2:12-18), forms part of the "whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11, 13) that enables the

Christian to withstand the attacks of the spiritual forces of evil.”⁹ The gospel of peace is foundational to the church and central to the Christian commissioning to a fallen world (John 20:19-21). In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church must understand, internalize and engage this holistic theology of *shalom*.

Toward a Holistic Living System Theology of Urban Mission and Ministry

The biblical *shalom* is foundational to a holistic living system theology of urban ministry and mission. This concept is echoed within Eldin Villafañe’s discourse on urban ministry; he calls it “the Jeremiah Paradigm for the City.” In the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “And seek the peace (*Shalom*) of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace (*Shalom*) you will have peace (*Shalom*)” (Jeremiah 29:7 KJV). Villafañe posits: “This paradigm provides an overarching, holistic vision for the city, one that can inspire our work in urban ministry.”¹⁰ In development of the theological framework, this author will highlight Villafañe’s Jeremiah paradigm - stemming from a theology of context (presence), a theology of mission (peace) and a theology of spirituality (prayer). The Jeremiah paradigm calls the people of God to be present as salt and light in the affairs of the city; to seek the *shalom* (wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, reconciliation, justice, welfare) of the city - both personal and social; and to nurture caring of the soul through prayer, equipped with the whole armor of God to confront spiritual wickedness,

⁹ *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, 706.

¹⁰ Villafañe. *Seek the Peace*, 2.

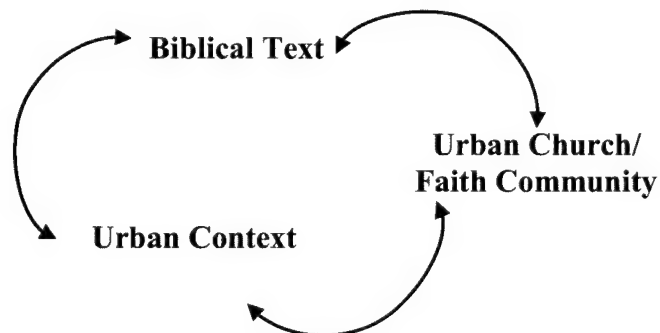
powers and principalities. These concepts are foundational as the urban church nurtures Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims.

Figure 2: The Jeremiah Paradigm



Figure 2 above represents the dynamic integrative relationship between the elements of the Jeremiah Paradigm. This paradigm guides the development of an urban theology that informs the guiding principles, vision and mission of Peaceseekers. In further development of this theology, the tripartite nature of theology of mission, as set forth by Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, is incorporated within the framework.¹¹ The tripartite areas as represented in figure 3 below include: the biblical text, the faith community and the urban context.¹²

Figure 3: The Tripartite Nature of Theology of Mission

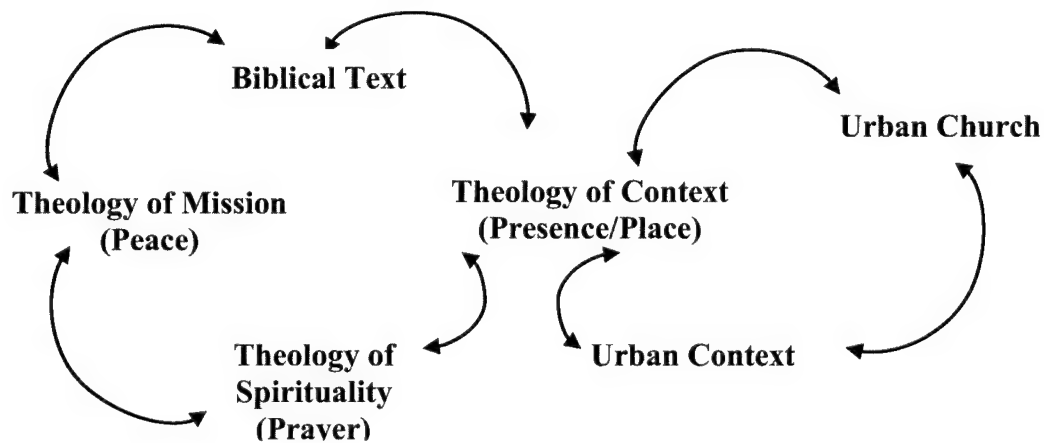


¹¹ Van Engen and Tiersma note that the three arena nature of this method is not original to them. Many others have highlighted something similar, particularly those who deal with contextualization from a missiological perspective, 265.

¹² Van Engen and Tiersma, 249.

The six areas as set forth within both models are complementary and coincide to enhance our holistic understanding of urban church mission. Figure 4 below represents the blending of these models in formation of a theology of urban mission, contextualized to Peaceseekers and in alignment with the living system. In nurturing a Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church; this model will bring us towards a living system theology.

Figure 4: Expanded Jeremiah Paradigm



Biblical Text

Scripture is the foundation on which this theology of urban mission and ministry builds. This exposition presumes that “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV) informs sound theology yielding vital ministry practice. Arising out of the Christian tradition of evangelical Protestantism,¹³ Peaceseekers views the biblical text as the divinely inspired word of God, the most authoritative guide for faith and practice.¹⁴

¹³ Evangelical Protestantism is used here referring to the religious movements and denominations that were birthed from revivals in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Key figures associated with these revivals include John Wesley (1703-1791), Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), George Whitefield (1715-1770), among others. Peaceseekers receives oversight from the American Baptist tradition.

¹⁴ The American Baptist Churches USA, http://www.abc-usa.org/what_we_believe/the-bible/, (accessed February 11, 2011).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man/woman of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

In journeying toward a living system theology, scripture lays the foundation. Living System Ministry is rooted in the reality that God makes living systems. Beginning in Genesis 1, we see the all-encompassing interrelated nature of God’s creation. In the opening statement of Genesis, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” the expression “heavens and the earth” is not intended to designate those items alone. It is an idiom referring to everything that is.¹⁵ The all-inclusive creative work of God is also affirmed through text such as (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). In addition, the wholeness, completeness and interconnectedness of God’s creative work is clear in the following iterations: “heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it” (Revelation 10:6); “the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them” (Acts 4:24; 14:15); “the world and everything in it” (Acts 17:24). John 1:3 emphatically declares the same: “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” The biblical texts on creation also set forth that God’s creation was good (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) and that creation glorifies God and carries out His will. In God’s originating, shalomic work of creation, all was good! The spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational dimensions flourished perfectly! This “orderly, highly complex and interrelated arrangement of living components (creation),” as Hall says, has worked

¹⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*. 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 397.

together to accomplish a high-level goal (glorifying God) as they were in proper relationship to each other.¹⁶

In Genesis 3, we find the account of “the fall of man,” the entry of human sin and the breach of shalom. The fall of man impacted all of creation, the whole interrelated system, yielding an impairment of the spiritual, physical, emotional and relational vitality of God’s living system.

The biblical text takes us from creation and the fall of man to the first homicide. The first family on earth, according to Genesis, consists of four persons at the point of Genesis 4:2. By the end of the narrative in Genesis 4:1-16, twenty-five percent of the earth’s population has committed homicide, twenty-five percent is the victim of a homicide, and the remaining fifty percent are immediate family members of both a victim and a perpetrator.¹⁷ This truth of scripture not only challenges the urban church to recognize the significance of survivors of homicide victims as suffering members of God’s living system, but also engages the church to see herself as the same. As Claus Westermann noted, every human being is potentially Cain and Abel, just as every human being is Adam and Eve.¹⁸ For others, the story of Cain and Abel presents a murderous “them” that is a murderous “us.”

Cain is “them” and Cain is “us;” Cain is all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve in relation to their brothers and sisters. The story takes the perspective of the victim not only to condemn the perpetrator, but at the same time to counter the tendency of the victim to turn into a perpetrator. Its greatness lies precisely in that it combines a clear judgment against the perpetrator with the commitment to protect him from the rage of the victim. God both relentlessly questions and

¹⁶ Hall, 20.

¹⁷ McEntire, 25.

¹⁸ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 318.

condemns Cain (Genesis 4:6-12) and graciously places a protective mark upon him (Genesis 4:15).¹⁹

In “protecting Cain from the rage of the victim,” Volf speaks of the victim as humanity. Abel is dead and therefore unable to direct any “rage” as it were towards Cain. In Genesis 4:14, Cain references the potential of this rage being perpetrated against him, in his response to God. He states, “Behold, thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground and from Thy face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me.” Cain’s response illustrates the impact of his sin of murder on the spiritual, physical, emotional and relational vitality of God’s living system. Cain shall be hidden from the face of God (spiritual-breach in relationship with God). Cain’s relationship with the ground is broken (physical – breach in relationship with the ground). Cain will be a vagrant and a wanderer (relational – breach in relationship with others). Whoever finds Cain may kill him. (emotional- emotional breach/fear of being killed).

In Genesis 4:17, Cain built a city and named it for his son Enoch. Victor Hamilton contends that this act is an extension of Cain’s fear of being murdered and a defiant attempt by Cain to provide security for himself.²⁰ Or, perhaps Cain rehearsed God’s words in his heart, “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted” (Genesis 4:8 NIV) and saw the accomplishment of building a city as a chance to return to God’s favor. The biblical text does not reveal Cain’s motivation for building the city. However, the importance of the need for redemption of the city must not be missed. As Genesis 4

¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, “Original Crime, Primal Care” in *God and the Victim: Theological Reflections on Evil, Victimization, Justice, and Forgiveness*, 23.

²⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapter 1-17* in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 238-244.

concludes, we find the descendants of Cain making developments in culture and technology (Genesis 4:18-22), as well as perpetuating the sin of murder (Genesis 4:23-24) in the city. In the brevity of Genesis 4, the world has changed dramatically because of the entrance of homicide.

The story of the first family gives us a picture of the individual and communal breach of shalom; affecting the spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational dimensions of creation. Vitality has been encumbered by sin and death. Though life is encumbered, the passage does not leave us without hope. Genesis 4:25 reports, that after losing two sons, God blessed Adam and Eve to give birth to Seth. Following the birth of Seth's son Enosh, the biblical text states, "then men began to call upon the name of the Lord." For the Living System Ministry practitioner, seeking the Lord, the God of shalom, leads to vitality. This is the road to redemption and peace for God's living system.

From creation to the fall of man, upon arrival at Genesis 4, the biblical text has communicated the following: 1) Things were good (shalom was complete). 2) Things went horribly wrong (shalom was breached). 3) Only God can redeem the situation (restore shalom). The biblical text leads us through the line of Adam to God's redemption of his living system through Christ Jesus.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1: 15-20 NIV)

From creation through the fall of man to redemption, the biblical text reveals the interrelated complexity of God's living systems. Acknowledging the aforementioned, living system theology integrates the spiritual, physical and social contexts as it endeavors to understand the multifaceted, interrelatedness of creation, the impact of humanity's fallenness on God's living systems, and the redemptive work of God in the "now and not yet"²¹ of his Kingdom.

The mystery of the "now and not yet" of the Kingdom of God reflects a dynamic tension in scripture. The Living System Ministry practitioner experiences this tension in the journey with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church. George Eldon Ladd describes this Kingdom tension as follows:

God's Kingdom is to work among men in two different stages. The Kingdom is yet to come in the form prophesied by Daniel when every human sovereignty will be displaced by God's sovereignty. The world will yet behold the coming of God's Kingdom with power. But the mystery, the new revelation, is that this very Kingdom of God has now come to work among men but in an utterly unexpected way. It is not now destroying human rule; it is not now abolishing sin from the earth; it is not now bringing the baptism of fire that John had announced. It has come quietly, unobtrusively, secretly. It can work among men and never be recognized by the crowds. In the spiritual realm, the Kingdom now offers to men the blessings of God's rule, delivering them from the power of Satan and sin. The Kingdom of God is an offer, a gift which may be accepted or rejected.²²

An example of this scriptural tension of the Kingdom in the work of Peaceseekers exists in the story of John. John is the father of a murdered son in the Boston area. He

²¹ The "now but not yet" or "already but not yet" kingdom theology posits that believers are actively taking part in the kingdom of God although the kingdom will not reach its full expression until sometime in the future. This paradigm is credited to Gerhardus Vos early in the 20th century. In the 1950's George Eldon Ladd, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, argued that there are two meanings to the kingdom of God: 1) God's authority and right to rule and 2) the realm in which God exercises authority. The kingdom, then, is described in Scripture both as a realm presently entered and as one entered in the future. Ladd concluded that the kingdom of God is both present and future (Hebrews 2:8-9; John 18:36; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 2:6; Luke 11:2; Mark 10:15).

²² George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (London: Paternoster Press, 1959) 55.

struggles with his faith following the murder of his son. John had a strong reaction to a sermon that his pastor preached from Isaiah 54. In a meeting with John, he stated, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper!”(Isaiah 54:17) That wasn’t true for my son!” John explained how he stormed out of church unable to understand how this passage of scripture applied to his situation. His son was dead. Evidently, the weapon formed against him did prosper. The chaplain working with John listened to John and prayed with John. He did not go into a theological explanation of the “now and not yet” of the Kingdom. He continues to journey with John, seeking alignment with the Holy Spirit’s work in John’s life. This has led to increased involvement within the Body of Christ in Boston and other systems within the city as this chaplain supports John socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. The chaplain discipling John is a learner/systems thinker who demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit in and through his relationship with Christ and others. This is the Peaceseekers profile of a discipler as highlighted in Chapter One. The chaplain engages in a redemptive method²³ in this journey. The reality of our fallenness and the dynamic Kingdom tension of the “now and not yet” upholds the significance of this redemptive method. This redemptive method will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

The biblical text exists within every thread of the tapestry that is living system theology. From creation through the fall of man to redemption, the biblical text points to an all sufficient God and his miraculous Kingdom. George Eldon Ladd describes it this way:

²³ The Redemptive Method set forth here originates in Douglas Hall’s *The Cat and the Toaster*: “Redemption is at work when 1) we confess and repent, 2) we receive Christ’s forgiveness, and 3) we exchange our death for God’s life,” 129.

The Kingdom of God is a miracle. It is the act of God. It is supernatural. Men cannot build the Kingdom, they cannot erect it. The Kingdom is the Kingdom of God; it is God's reign, God's rule. God has entrusted the Gospel of the Kingdom to men. It is our responsibility to proclaim the Good News about the Kingdom. But the actual working of the Kingdom is God's working. The fruitage is produced not by human effort or skill but by the life of the Kingdom itself. It is God's deed. This is the mystery of the Kingdom!²⁴

Theology of Context (Place)

In *City of God, City of Satan*, Robert Linthicum suggests that the starting place for our theology of context begin with the question, how does God view my city? Linthicum presents the city as a battleground between God and Satan. He exhorts the church to embrace her call to the city acknowledging that our world is inevitably and irreversibly becoming an urban world.²⁵ With this reality, Linthicum further challenges the church to view the bible as an urban book. He posits:

It is hard for us to appreciate that the world of Moses and David and Daniel and Jesus was an urban world. But it was – their world was probably more urban than any civilization before it or any after it for the next fifteen hundred years. The world in which the Bible was written was dominated by its cities. By 2000 B.C.E., Abraham's city of Ur numbered 250,000. Ancient Nineveh was so large that it took three days to cross it on foot (Jonah 3:3). Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar was an amazing city with eleven miles of walls and a water and irrigation system (perhaps even including flush toilets) not equaled again until the end of the nineteenth century.²⁶

Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz speak of the city as divine intention, surmising that the city was associated with order, creation, civilization, life and beauty. They underscore the urban images of scripture, deducing:

In keeping with the urban intention of God, Genesis images of the garden elsewhere in Scripture become urban images. The river that waters the garden (Genesis 2:10) is pictured in Psalm 46:5 as watering "the city of God." Zechariah

²⁴ Ladd, 64.

²⁵ Linthicum, 19.

²⁶ Linthicum, 21.

combines the Edenic features of the river and life into “living waters” that go out from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9) And preeminently the Eden allusions reappear in the New Jerusalem of Revelation, “the holy city coming down out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:2). In this shrine city there is no temple as of old; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22). Eden’s river is there, its banks now lined with multiple trees of life “for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). Did the fall of Adam and Eve change this positive perception of the city or God’s concern for the city? Despite sin’s radical distortion of God’s urban purposes, the city remains a mark of grace as well as rebellion, a mark of preserving, conserving grace shared with all under the shadow of the common curse. Urban life, though fallen, is still more than merely livable.”²⁷

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, God’s concern for the city is underscored. The living urban images in scripture, attested to by Linthicum, herald the city as God’s living system. This author further recalls that Cain, as the founder of the first city in Genesis 4:17, was a survivor of a homicide victim as well as a murderer. Cain’s descendants (also survivors of a homicide victim) made significant developments in culture and technology (Genesis 4:20-22), as well as perpetuated the sin of murder, (Genesis 4:23-24) all while expanding the city. One could posit that Cain’s city was a dominant secondary culture²⁸ with its attention to technologies. While this sets forth the motif of the city as an abode of personal and systemic sin, hope could be found in the positives of secondary

²⁷ Harvey M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 87.

²⁸ In *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age*, Hall presents the importance of understanding the social construct of culture in relationship to the complexity of the city as a living system. Awareness of primary and secondary cultures helps the living system ministry practitioner understand how each culture gets work done. In primary culture, people rely on personal, primary relationships, with attention to oral communication, learning by modeling, identifying with extended family systems, and a spiritual approach to life. In secondary culture, people rely on impersonal, secondary relationships, with attention to individualism, a preference for written communication over the spoken word, emphasis on a nuclear family rather than large, extended family groups, and a scientific rather than spiritual approach to life. Recognizing that primary and secondary culture exists on a continuum, the practitioner is cautioned away from idolizing the highly relational primary culture at the expense of valuing the contribution of secondary culture. This concept is developed in detail between pages 17-32 of Hall’s text.

culture and the redemptive potential of the cultural and technological developments within Cain's city. Living system theology cautions against a primary versus secondary culture stance; encouraging a more biblical blended view of both. We see a perfect blend of primary and secondary elements in something as common to us as a Bible, and, even more amazingly, in our Risen Lord himself, who is the Word made flesh, the God-Man."²⁹

The hope of Genesis 4 is widely attributed to the birth of Seth and his worshiping offspring as scripture proclaims, "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). While the dualism between Cain's descendents (survivors of a homicide victim and a murderer) and Seth's descendents (survivors of a homicide victim and a murderer) sets the stage for the "Babylon versus Jerusalem"³⁰ theme in scripture, it's important to note that every city contains both Babylon and Jerusalem. As set forth by Robert Linthicum, "Every city is the battleground between the god of Babylon (Baal, Satan) and the God of Jerusalem (Yahweh, the Lord) for domination and control."³¹

The church's living system theology must acknowledge the redemptive potential of every city. Not just for the individuals within the city, but also the systems that compose the city. "We cannot simply save individuals in the city and expect the city will get saved. If the Church does not deal with the systems in the city, then it will not

²⁹ Hall, 30.

³⁰ The Babylon versus Jerusalem theme in scripture speaks to a motif of polar opposites. Babylon is represented scripturally as a corrupt city totally surrendered to the rule of Satan (Genesis 11:4; Revelation 17:1-6; Isaiah 14:5-21; Jeremiah 50:2-17; Jeremiah 51: 6-10; Daniel 3:1-7; Revelation 18:2-19,24). Jerusalem is applauded as the ideal city belonging to God with a shalomic reality (Psalm 122:6-9; Psalm 147:2; Exodus 25-40; Isaiah 8:18; Micah 4:1; Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The motifs of the evil Babylon and the idealized Jerusalem should serve to remind us that every city contains both.

³¹ Linthicum, 25.

effectively transform the lives of that city's individuals."³² Both the individuals within the city, as well as the city itself, are God's living systems. Both the individuals within the city, as well as the city itself, reflect Babylon and Jerusalem. Living system theology acknowledges the shalomic city as the city in full alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system. With the fallenness of man in view, this city exists within the "now and not yet" of the Kingdom of God. Yielding to a mental model of one motif over the other (Babylon vs. Jerusalem), in the sense of ignoring the presence of both, places the urban ministry practitioner in danger. This idealized polarization gives way to unintended negative returns and an absence of the redemptive method.

"Jesus came to the city to die for the city, its systems, and its people. Christ asks us to participate in what he has done. We are to take up our cross and follow Him into the city – there to be willing to minister, to suffer and, if need be, to lose our lives."³³ This is a tough and humbling challenge for the urban minister. It speaks to the ministry of Peaceseekers in the city of Boston. As a Peaceseekers Chaplain, this author has been called upon to serve in what the Boston Police Department terms, "hot spots."³⁴ One such situation involved providing pastoral care at a memorial vigil³⁵ located in the center of a community's warring factions. The reality of the potential for violence was high. This Living System Ministry practitioner experienced competing "Adam and Eve" versus

³² Linthicum, 46-47.

³³ Linthicum, 127.

³⁴ The term "hotspot" is used by the City of Boston's Police Department to indicate an area that has a high likelihood for violence and other crime.

³⁵ The term "Memorial Vigil" is used to indicate the candlelight vigils in memory of murdered loved ones commonly held in the city of Boston at the murder site. These vigils serve to honor the life of the murdered loved one, address community trauma, raise awareness for violence prevention, while mobilizing the community for peace promotion.

“New Creation” mental models; one saying “It’s not safe here. Leave and don’t look back,” the other saying “God is in complete control.”³⁶ As the vigil ended, the role of pastoral care giver included driving home a “proven risk”³⁷ young person. This Living System Ministry practitioner understood that the potential for loss of life was high, but went forward believing that she was in alignment with God’s life as it flowed through God’s living system. This Living System Ministry practitioner and “proven risk” young person both arrived home safely.

Theology of Mission (Peace)

“The church is an instrument, a servant, of peace in the city. It preaches and lives out the Shalom of God.”³⁸ As illustrated within the theology of shalom section of this discourse, there is no one English word that captures the meaning of shalom. This shalom speaks to the wholeness, health and harmoniousness of the living organism that is the city. The classical missiological categories of the Church’s mission as she ministers as a living system are: *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*.

Kerygma

“The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:26)

³⁶ Mental models are subconscious understandings that tell us how to take action. In *The Cat & the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age*, Hall presents the importance of examining “Adam and Eve Mental Models” versus “New Creation Mental Models.” Adam and Eve Mental Models drive us to do what Adam and Eve did, while New Creation Mental Models drive us to do what Christ did, showing us how to live in the “now and not yet” of the Kingdom of God. Hall discusses this concept in detail between pages 274-302 of his text.

³⁷“Proven Risk” is a term indicating a young person whose history includes engagement in violence and/or other criminal activity.

³⁸ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 3.

“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” This quote, attributed to Francis of Assisi, challenges a narrow view of the church’s declaration of the gospel. *Kerygma* refers to the proclamation of the gospel (good news) of peace through Jesus Christ. In considering the good news of peace, the urban church might ask herself, what is good news for survivors of homicide victims? While the answer to this question will differ from survivor to survivor, Peaceseekers has discovered that good news for survivors of homicide victims includes the spiritual, physical and social realms. These realms represent the holistic nature of shalom as reflected within the complexity of God’s living systems. Peaceseekers³⁹ uses seven biblical principles of peace to cultivate partnerships for proclaiming God’s shalom and his coming Kingdom. These principles assist people with envisioning and working towards a holistic proclamation of shalom. They are: faith, hope, love, unity, justice, forgiveness and courage. One of the manners in which Peaceseekers endeavors to make these values live is through community bible studies on these seven principles of peace. Bible studies are attended by a cross section of the community (including survivors of homicide victims) and include the following kerygmatic components:

1. The background assumption that the Bible is God breathed, with attention to 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. Biblical word studies on each principle⁴⁰
3. Instruction on the presence of the principle in Old Testament passages
4. Instruction on the presence of the principle in New Testament passages
5. Reflections on what the principle means for each participant personally

³⁹ The seven principles of peace are the guiding principles for the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute in Boston, Massachusetts. The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute was founded by Joseph and Clementina Chéry following the murder of their son Louis. The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute serves as a center of healing, teaching and learning for families and communities dealing with murder, trauma, grief and loss.

⁴⁰ The seven biblical principles of peace word studies are structured in the manner in which *shalom* and *eirene* are handled within the theology of shalom section of this discourse.

6. Reflections on how each participant is growing in the principle
7. Reflections on how each participant is challenged by the principle
8. A review of struggles, strengths and strategies for living out the principle at home, in school, at church, at work, in the city.
9. Prayers for help living the principle in alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system.

Koinonia

Paul and Timothy, bond servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation (*koinonia*) in the gospel from the first day until now. (Philippians 1:1-5)

Philippi was a culturally diverse and complex city, not unlike most urban centers. The church in Philippi had been very supportive of Paul, committed to the gospel of peace and given to *koinonia*. In the opening of Paul's letter to the Philippians, he comments on their consistency in *koinonia*. *Koinonia* refers to the fellowship of the church. This fellowship speaks to a holistic, genuinely faithful Christian community. The *koinonia* of the church is substantive, intimate and reliable. Paul writes to the Philippian church aware that they were undergoing persecution. He encourages them in their suffering, acknowledging that suffering is a necessary part of the church's *koinonia* with Christ. Paul declares, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

Survivors of homicide victims are suffering members of God's living system. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church needs a holistic *koinonia*; one that incorporates the spiritual, physical and social dimensions. One of the ways in which Peaceseekers endeavors to nurture this

koinonia is through its Lady Peaceseekers Women's Retreat. This diverse group of female leaders in the urban church gather for a week long retreat every July. During this time they set personal and communal goals for growing in *koinonia* and seeking the *shalom* of the city. They support one another throughout the year, holding each other accountable and challenging each other in a redemptive method as they live the "now and not yet of the Kingdom."

Diakonia

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (*diakonia*) to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4: 11-14)

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus was most likely written while the apostle was imprisoned in Rome. A major theme in this letter to the Ephesians is the church as the body of Christ and the unity inherent within the Body. One of the ways in which that unity is cultivated is through *diakonia*. *Diakonia* refers to the church's role not just in serving one another but in serving fallen humanity with the gospel of shalom. This *diakonia* gives attention to the spiritual, physical and social realms, seeking justice, healing and reconciliation. One way in which Peaceseekers endeavors to nurture *diakonia* in Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims is through capacity building trainings. Our training entitled, *Strengthening the Church as Agents of God's Shalom*, endeavors to equip churches towards shalomic Christian education and spiritual formation structures. In Chapter 1, Clementina Chéry⁴¹ spoke about the importance of churches developing ministries that serve survivors of homicide

⁴¹ Clementina Chéry cofounded the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute in Boston, Massachusetts following the murder of her son Louis.

victims. This concept is emphasized within the training. This note of emphasis came through acknowledgement of an unintended negative consequence. Many churches have some form of prison *diakonia*. The focus on prison *diakonia* by these churches yielded a sense of isolation and anger for survivors of homicide victims within the churches' communities (internally and externally). Extending *diakonia* to one population within the living system unintentionally contributed to harm in another part of the living system. An ongoing commitment to the redemptive method helps the urban church in nurturing shalomic *diakonia* in the city. While this process is complex and sometimes exhausting, the urban church is encouraged towards vitality by the words of the apostle Paul. "And let us not lose heart in doing good for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:9-10).

Leitourgia

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

Leitourgia refers to the sacrificial service, submission, praise, celebration, testimony and humble profession offered to the God of shalom by his church. Humanity was created to worship God. This worship is holistic, incorporating the spiritual, physical and social dimensions. The church worships God through all that she is and all that she does. This worship comes through a process of *phronesis* (Christian mind-set) by means of *kenosis* (self-emptying). "It is critical to understand that this *phronesis*, or Christian thinking, refers not only to one's thought process but also to the emotion and attitudes as

well as the ensuing lifestyle that proceeds from them.”⁴² Survivors of homicide victims are seeking a church that loves mercy, does justly and walks humbly with her God (Micah 6-8). They seek a worshipping church that displays concrete acts of faith, hope, love, unity, justice, forgiveness and courage. The urban church that nurtures Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims must model itself after the God of *shalom* – who “left glory in heaven to identify with the poor, with the orphans and widows, with the sick and the brokenhearted, with the sinner – the one who climbed that cruel cross of Calvary for our salvation.”⁴³ Peaceseekers endeavors to model, support and nurture this lifestyle within the Body of Christ in the Greater Boston Area. Two ways in which we do this are through partnerships for Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness Month and the Mother’s Day Walk for Peace. The State of Massachusetts recognizes Survivors of Homicide Victims Awareness month November 20th through December 20th annually. During this time, Peaceseekers participates in, as well as encourages churches to host programs to promote God’s *Shalom* and raise awareness of the needs and contributions of survivors of homicide victims. Annually in the month of May, Peaceseekers participates in, as well as encourages churches to participate in the Mother’s Day Walk for Peace. This walk is held in the early morning hours of Mother’s Day to raise funds to support the work of the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute. This walk is highly regarded and celebrated by community members as a means of physical, spiritual and social support for survivors of homicide victims.

⁴² Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 7-8.

⁴³ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 10.

Theology of Spirituality (Prayer)

The twin phenomena of urbanization and globalization, which define the ethos of our great cities, demand no more and no less than an authentically biblical spirituality. If the whole church is to take the whole gospel to the whole world, it must have a holistic spirituality.⁴⁴

In cultivating Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, a holistic spirituality is paramount. As the gospel speaks to each dimension of the human condition, we serve as conduits of God's life as it flows through his living system. Survivors yearn for a church that is there with them in the courthouse, as well as the prayer meeting. They want a church that will walk with them in the social, physical, political and spiritual challenges that are encountered following the traumatic death of a loved one. Eldin Villafañe posits, "There is no greater need for 21st century evangelicals in the cities, than to articulate, in both word and deed a social spirituality."⁴⁵ This author agrees. Survivors of homicide victims yearn for an authentically biblical spirituality that does not end at the church doors but travels holistically into their lives, into the city, and into the many nations that they represent.

In the ministry of Peaceseekers, as we have spent time navigating political systems, judicial systems, welfare reform, health care systems, church systems, etc., the reality of the presence and prayer of the church in the city is critical. While prayer is both absolutely necessary and strategic, it must be coupled with presence. Working for peace and prosperity in the city must contain both. Robert Linthicum highlights five areas of importance in the church's prayer for the city. Based in Psalm 122:6-9, they are: 1) Pray for the City's Economic Health, 2) Pray for the Safety of the City, 3) Pray for

⁴⁴ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 12.

⁴⁵ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 12.

the Political Order, 4) Pray for the People, and 5) Pray with Importunity. Like Linthicum, this author believes that our vigilant prayer in these areas must undergird our practice.

Pray for peace in Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper. O Jerusalem, may there be peace within your walls and prosperity in your palaces. For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “May you have peace.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek what is best for you, O Jerusalem. (Psalm 122:6-9 NLT)

Pray for the City’s Economic Health

God’s shalomic city heralds economic wholeness for all. Poverty, classism and marginalization do not exist. As we join with survivors of homicide victims in prayer for the economic prosperity of the city, we seek this wellness for all of its inhabitants and systems. “God will restore the fortunes of the desolate city, for he is concerned about the economics of the city. God is concerned about urban economics precisely because it is wealth that either liberates or oppresses the city.”⁴⁶ In view of God’s shalom, the urban minister must pray for the equitable distribution of wealth and economic health for the city and all of its citizens.

Pray for the Safety of the City

The psalmists’ prayer for peace inside the walls of the city (Psalm 122:7) speaks to our intercession for the safety of the city and its citizens. In Jeremiah 29, God instructs his people to seek the shalom of the city of Babylon. He goes on to instruct them to build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat what they produce, to marry and give their children in marriage (Jeremiah 29:5-7). These lifestyle exhortations ideally take place in a shalomic environment – an environment where the citizens of the city do not live in fear

⁴⁶ Linthicum, 150.

but embrace a climate of safety. As we join with survivors of homicide victims in praying for the safety of the city, our prayers cover every dimension of the human condition. We pray for every suffering member of God's living system. We pray for the widow and the orphan, the survivors of murder victims, as well as those who commit murder. We pray for the peace of every system.

We are to pray for the police, that they will flee both corruption and unjust practices. We are to pray for the judicial system, that it will be uncompromisingly just and fair to all its citizens rather than showing favoritism toward those accused of "white-collar" crime or those who hold significant political or economic power. We are to pray for our city's safety.⁴⁷

Pray for the Political Order

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

As instructed above in 1 Timothy 2, when God's people pray for those in authority, it impacts the quality of life of the city. Prayer for the political order of our cities acknowledges God as the final authority over his living system. There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. (Romans 13:1). As the church seeks the peace of the city, she partners in intercession with survivors of homicide victims for just, wise and righteous governmental authorities. King Solomon provides a paradigm in Psalm 72 for the urban church's prayer for political leaders. He prays that the King would judge in righteousness, defend the afflicted, save the children of the needy, crush the oppressor, deliver the needy and the helpless, have mercy on the weak and rescue from oppression and violence. The Living

⁴⁷ Linthicum, 151.

System Ministry practitioner prays for the appointment and development of leaders with this character. His/her prayers extend to the political leaders and the processes that they govern. They intercede for peace, justice and prosperity for if God's people "humble themselves in prayer, turn from their wicked ways and seek His face, He has promised to hear from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14 KJV).

Pray for the People

O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. (Daniel 9:18-19)

The urban church prays for the people and the city from a place of humility. She recognizes God's mercy and her need for forgiveness. She cries out to God to heal his living system for his name sake. In Daniel's prayer above, he seeks God earnestly, acknowledging the people of God had become a reproach to their neighbors. He confesses the wrongdoing of God's people and seeks God's mercy. The Living System Ministry practitioner might even say that Daniel employed the redemptive method, confessing unintended negative returns and seeking God's restoration and newness of life. As the urban church prays for the people of the city, she prays for all of its people. She prays for the shalom of the people without exclusion, for God's salvation is for all and his house is a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7).

Pray with Importunity

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, 'There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Give me legal protection from my opponent. And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, Even though I do not

fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out. And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?’ (Luke 18:1-8)

Scripture is replete with exhortations of prayer, not just how to pray but with the urgency and seriousness with which we should pray. In the aforementioned scripture, Jesus uses the parable of the widow and the unrighteous judge to teach the significance of faith-rooted persistence in prayer. It indeed takes faith to proceed in prayer when things don’t appear to be improving. It is with a “burning patience”⁴⁸ filled with importunity that the urban church petitions her God on behalf of the city. The Living System Ministry practitioner knows that the “effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:16).” Robert Linthicum echoes this sentiment asserting:

God’s people are not to take lightly the privilege given to the church to pray for the city. This is prayer which is not to be focused upon the Christian nor upon the church, but upon the totality of that city, in all its economic, political, judicial, social, and spiritual dimensions. Only such intentional praying will reach the city and change the church. It is only upon the bedrock of the intentional praying of God’s people that a city can be built “whose architect and builder is God’ (Hebrews 11:10).⁴⁹

Three Potential Barriers To Living System Ministry And Mission With Survivors Of Homicide Victims In U.S. Cities

Theology of mission is a multi- and interdisciplinary enterprise having to do with three arenas. “1) We apply biblical and theological presuppositions and values; 2) To the enterprise of the church’s ministry and mission, and 3) Set them in the context of

⁴⁸ Villafane, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 45.

⁴⁹ Linthicum, 155.

specific activities carried out in particular times and places.”⁵⁰ Engaging the complex enterprise of theology of mission, in and of itself, poses difficulty for fallen humanity. It is exactly this truth that continues to lead the Living System Ministry and Mission practitioner to embrace the redemptive method. There are many potential (interrelated) barriers one may encounter as a practitioner. This author highlights three such barriers that have been encountered in the ministry of Peaceseekers.

Killing Vitality

In order to engage positively with a living system, adjustment of personal mental models is necessary. As Living System Ministry practitioners learn to see the high-level living system reality versus the common low-level thinking, they will enhance the health and vitality of the system. High-level thinking nurtures the vitality of the living system as opposed to adding to its dysfunction. In short, the practitioner’s mental models determine the appropriate “entry point” for the system. The only correct mental model is God’s high-level order. “Living systems are complex; that is, they are high-level systems. The only true order is God’s order, and it is high level. The low-level things we make come from what we learn from his high level of order. We place them in our own categories, which seem like “order” to us, but they are not the same nature of order as God’s high-level order.”⁵¹ When the living system is approached with low-level thinking, we kill vitality.

For example, Peaceseekers was invited to join a community partnership for preventing violence and promoting peace. The partnership consisted of Christian clergy, Christian groups, grassroots organizations, health centers and higher-education

⁵⁰ Van Engen and Tiersma, 249.

⁵¹ Hall, 318.

institutions. The role of Peaceseekers was to facilitate the collaboration, nurturing shared vision. Some vitality emerged through this collaboration. The partnership yielded increased connections between churches and a diverse group of community entities, yielding more supportive structures for survivors of homicide victims and communities most directly impacted by violence. As the vitality emerged, the partnership gained national attention. The more attention the collaboration garnered, the more the partnership struggled to maintain shared vision and was overcome by low-level thinking, attempting to control the vitality. Partners became divided on how things should be handled and the lead partner (the partner managing the finances), began to dictate the guidelines for the partnership. This resulted in discouragement, a loss of vitality and ultimately the dismantling of the collaboration.

Failure to Correct Dysfunction in the Social System

Engaging the complexity of living systems means encountering dysfunction. While in many cases it may seem easier to ignore the dysfunction or write it off as inevitable, “there are times when it is more important to discern and correct dysfunction in the social system than anything else you can do.”⁵² For the Living System Ministry practitioner, correcting dysfunction does not mean “fixing” the social system. Instead, the Living System Ministry practitioner works with and strengthens the system by employing the redemptive method.⁵³

⁵² Hall, 329.

⁵³ This process is discussed in detail in *The Cat and the Toaster* (p 329). According to Hall, you expect unintended counter-productivity from your actions. Notice it and neutralize it through redemptive intervention. An environment must be created where it is safe to confess and where forgiveness is possible. In doing so, you are nurturing the development of the social system’s own immune system.

There are many types of dysfunction that could be highlighted here. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, we will touch upon the system dysfunction of racism and dynamics of power, privilege and difference. U. S. cities contain survivors of homicide victims from throughout the global diaspora. Racism is the “elephant in the room” for Americans that keeps the nation in trouble. “The trouble we’re in privileges some groups at the expense of others. It creates a yawning divide in levels of income, wealth, dignity, safety, health, and quality of life. It promotes fear, suspicion, discrimination, harassment, and violence. It sets people against one another.”⁵⁴

The dysfunction of racism is present in the Church’s urban ministry with survivors of homicide victims. “An absolute need is that those who plan to minister to another culture must positively care about those people, be able to have effective communication with them, and understand how they perceive their own needs before even attempting to think about relevant ministry to them.”⁵⁵ This method, suggested by Doug Hall in Villafañe’s *Seek the Peace of the City*, echoes the Living System Ministry practitioner’s “process of the gospel.”⁵⁶ Dealing with the dysfunction of racism requires

⁵⁴ Johnson, 9.

⁵⁵ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 100.

⁵⁶ Douglas Hall, lecture notes for *Seek the Peace of the City: Theology & Ethics for Urban Ministry*, Doctor of Ministry Residency II. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Boston, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, Boston, MA, June 2011. The “process of the gospel” speaks to the archetype of Jesus training his disciples. Just as true discipleship permeates every area of the disciples’ experience, shalom speaks of wholeness, completeness, and reconciliation to God and ones fellow man. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, the urban church serves as the disciples of the God of peace bringing the peace of God to a fallen world. This is not a product but a process, the “process of the gospel.” The “process of the gospel” involves observation, positive regard, relevant communication, mutual meeting of perceived needs, meeting of basic needs and multiplication. These areas will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this discourse.

that the Living System Ministry practitioner explore their inherent “unconscious bias”⁵⁷ that s/he possess, and ask themselves how it is impacting their alignment with God’s life as it flows through His living systems. Sociologist Allan Johnson posits, “being part of the solution to a trouble that already divides us begins with coming together around the simple truth that we’re all in trouble and that pretending we aren’t is a key to what keeps us apart.”⁵⁸ Johnson’s statement echoes the Living System Ministry sentiment that it is vital to make our fallenness the point from which we begin. In correcting the dysfunction of racism (dealing with the infection of racism), the Living System Ministry practitioner must “face the elephant in the room” and employ the redemptive method. Confessing the sin of racism, and the multifaceted interrelated ills resulting from this sin, ushers us into repentance and seeking God’s forgiveness and high-level thinking. As set forth by Eldin Villafañe, “we must confess and celebrate. Confession is a prerequisite to celebration. It is a soft yet vital note in the rhythmic swing of our urban spirituality. We must transcend the bitter animosity of past wrongs. We must forgive and realize that our fight is not against “white” or “brown” or “black” – “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

⁵⁷ Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias or implicit social cognition, refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations. A test has been developed by professors Mahzarin R. Banaji, Anthony G. Greenwald and Brian Nosek to assist individuals with identification of implicit bias. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/> (accessed January 23, 2016) and Project Implicit, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/> (accessed January 23, 2016)

⁵⁸ Johnson, 123.

In Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, Peaceseekers has engaged with the sin of racism and its dynamics of power, privilege and difference. In our experience, when a loved one is murdered, the case is often addressed differently within the media, criminal justice system, and other systems based upon the conditions surrounding the murder, as well as, the race⁵⁹ and socio-economic status of the family. We often hear survivors of murder victims of color, who live in the city, comment on their frustration with “positive” media attention, and enhanced resources provided for some survivors as compared with others. They often discuss the disparity in which situations like Columbine, Sandyhook, and white suburban killings are handled in comparison with the common acceptance or downplaying of murders within communities of color. This dynamic produced by the sin of racism, kills vitality and cultivates division, tension, anger and resentment. All survivors of murder victims are suffering members of God’s living system regardless of race or socio-economic status.

Lack of Burning Patience and Redemptive Thinking

If the gospel, in fact, is not big enough, wide enough, enduring enough, to speak to each dimension of the human condition in human cultures, it is not universal enough to take away the sins of the world.⁶⁰

At the core of communication is our worldview, what we value or perceive as true. These premises and assumptions may or may not be accurate but are very difficult to change. Our mental models flow from these core assumptions and inform the manner in which we communicate and engage with the world. The gospel is indeed big enough

⁵⁹ The term “race” here is being used to connote a social concept, a human classification referring to a group of people identified as distinct from other groups because of supposed physical or genetic traits shared by the group. This definition is adapted from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com> (accessed August 12, 2012).

⁶⁰ Harvie M. Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 197.

to speak to each dimension of the human condition, however, the gospel message can be distorted as it is communicated through our mental models. “The redemption of our thought life is critically important if we are to work with God in what he is doing in our world.”⁶¹ The process of redeeming our thought life is progressive. A living system theology demands patience. This is a “burning patience” that keeps us from giving up as we live in the Kingdom tension of “now and not yet.” Eldin Villafaña frames it this way:

Burning patience is that quality of faith that gives meaning and strength to our present endeavors – to our present ministry. Trials and tribulations will come. Failures will be real. Yet, we have a vision of the splendid city. We know – we have a foretaste of heaven, the Spirit of God burns within us – we have hope, we can be patient. We have a “burning patience!”..... It speaks to me and informs me that urban ministry requires time, commitment, fervor – in the biblical idiom, to be “filled with the Spirit” – for it is a long haul! We cannot enter the splendid city in a day. The Spirit of God does not produce his “measures of grace” in our earthly city in a day. We must be patient. We must work patiently – but not passively!⁶²

As the Living System Ministry practitioner works patiently but not passively, the Holy Spirit leads. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). It is the Spirit of God that enables the urban minister to function with a burning patience that communicates the gospel to every human dimension. The Pentecost coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 echoes this sentiment.

All the disciples ‘were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues’ (Acts 2:4). Why was the gift of tongues given now? It was a sign of assurance that the Holy Spirit would enable them to communicate the truths of the gospel to the whole world.⁶³

⁶¹ Hall, 308.

⁶² Villafaña, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 45-46.

⁶³ Conn and Ortiz, 136.

With internalization of the aforementioned principles, after suffering exhaustion and burnout, Peaceseekers now highlights the importance of clergy and lay leader self-care. Self-care is not self-ish. It is the incarnational model set forth by Jesus. In John 5:19, Jesus tells us that apart from the Father, the Son can do nothing. As we follow Christ's model, we seek the Father for direction in all that we do, sitting at Christ's feet like Mary, waiting on the Spirit's guidance, and never compromising times of refreshing and filling. In *God So Loves the City*, Mary Thiessen calls the urban ministry practitioner back to life when the oppressive structures in the urban environment have sucked the vitality from them. She highlights three life giving processes: 1) Focus on how the Holy Spirit breathes life into suffocating cities; 2) Reflect deliberately on and intentionally recollect God's mission; 3) Look for God's unexpected interventions.⁶⁴ Thiessen also notes that God often brings life to urban churches, communities, and individuals through the redemptive use of crises.

In Peaceseekers, we have found this to be resoundingly accurate in our ministry with survivors of homicide victims. The crisis of losing a loved one to murder often becomes an entry point for God's redemptive action. Sarah is the mother of a murdered son. She often shares the importance of her faith in coping with her son's death. She expresses compassion towards her son's killer and her concern for communal healing. When asked how she could be forgiving in such a horrible circumstance she replied, "I remembered what Christ did for me." People often felt Sarah was "losing it" or in denial. For many, she couldn't possibly be handling the murder of her son in this manner. But, she did. That is not to say that she does not have other grief reactions.

⁶⁴ Van Engen and Tiersma, 86-101.

After fifteen years, she continues to grieve the loss of her son. It's not to say her pain is not deep and abiding. But, she continues to uphold Christ's sacrifice for her, as that which compelled her to extend that same love to her son's killer. With a burning patience and submission to the Holy Spirit, Sarah travels to share her story and continues to seek the well-being of her son's murderer.

L.I.V.E: Living System, Incarnational Interaction, Vision for Vitality, Evaluative Redemptive Living

The development of a holistic living system theology of urban ministry with survivors of homicide victims is a complicated, multifaceted and interrelated endeavor. God makes living systems. The Living System Ministry practitioner, in the spirit of Psalm 118:17 proclaims, "You shall not die but L.I.V.E. and declare the works of the Lord"⁶⁵ over every dimension of God's living system. This author offers the acronym L.I.V.E: Living System, Incarnational Interaction, Vision for Vitality, Evaluative Redemptive Living in summation of this chapter's discourse.

Living System

A living system is an orderly, highly complex, and highly interrelated arrangement of living components that work together to accomplish a high-level goal when in proper relationship to each other.⁶⁶ Living System Ministry is participation with God as his life flows through his living system.⁶⁷ God makes living systems and a holistic living system theology of urban ministry and mission is, rooted in the biblical shalom, framed by a theology of mission (peace), a theology of context (presence/place), and a theology of

⁶⁵ Emphasis is the authors'.

⁶⁶ Hall, xxiv.

⁶⁷ Hall, xxiv.

spirituality (prayer). Systems Thinking is a discipline that takes a holistic view of complex, interrelated systems seeking to understand their interconnectedness in relationship to the whole. Living Systems Ministry and Mission acknowledges the church as a learning organization and, incorporating the theory of Peter Senge, utilizes the five disciplines of systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision and team learning within its praxis in the city.⁶⁸ Survivors of homicide victims are suffering members of God's living system.

Incarnational Interaction

As urban workers we participate in what God is doing. We do not bring God's reign into the city. God is already there. He invites us to join Him in His activity. In humility we must realize that we will never have all the answers. We cannot meet all the needs. We are not the answer. The ministry belongs to God, not to us.⁶⁹

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, the Living System Ministry practitioner, in partnership with the Holy Spirit provides assiduous support socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. The urban church's incarnational practice acknowledges the power of the gospel to reach every dimension of the human condition. As a vessel of shalom in the city, the Church's incarnational mission reflects *Kerygma*, *Koinonia*, *Diakonia* and *Leitourgia*.

Vision for Vitality

As servants of God's *shalom* in the city, the urban church experiences vitality as she participates with God as His life flows through his living systems. Engaging this

⁶⁸ Senge, 129-216.

⁶⁹ Van Engen and Teirisma, 15.

complex enterprise poses difficulty for fallen humanity. As the church falls out of alignment with God's vitality, she eventually confesses specific unintended negative returns and employs the redemptive method. The urban church also strives to avoid barriers to Living System Ministry and Mission such as, killing vitality through simplistic, cause & effect thinking (Adam and Eve mental models), failure to correct dysfunction in the social system and lack of burning patience and redemptive thought. As the Living System Ministry practitioner learns to see the high-level living system reality versus the common simplistic, cause & effect thinking, they will enhance the health and vitality of the system. High-level thinking nurtures the vitality of the living system, as the only true order is God's order, and it is high level.

Evaluative Redemptive Living

The development of a holistic living system theology of urban ministry with survivors of homicide victims must begin in Genesis. Genesis transitions us from the original shalomic environment through the fall of man into the first murder by the hand of Cain, and the first survivors of a homicide victim in Adam, Eve and Cain. From Genesis through Revelation, we journey into the redemptive, all sufficient sacrifice of Christ Jesus and his life, suffering, death and resurrection for sinful humanity. We encounter the "now and not yet" of the Kingdom of God and in the spirit of Revelation 3:18,⁷⁰ embrace the necessity for evaluative redemptive living.

Evaluative Redemptive Living requires a "burning patience." "Burning patience is that quality of faith which permits one to live in the "now and not yet," to live in the

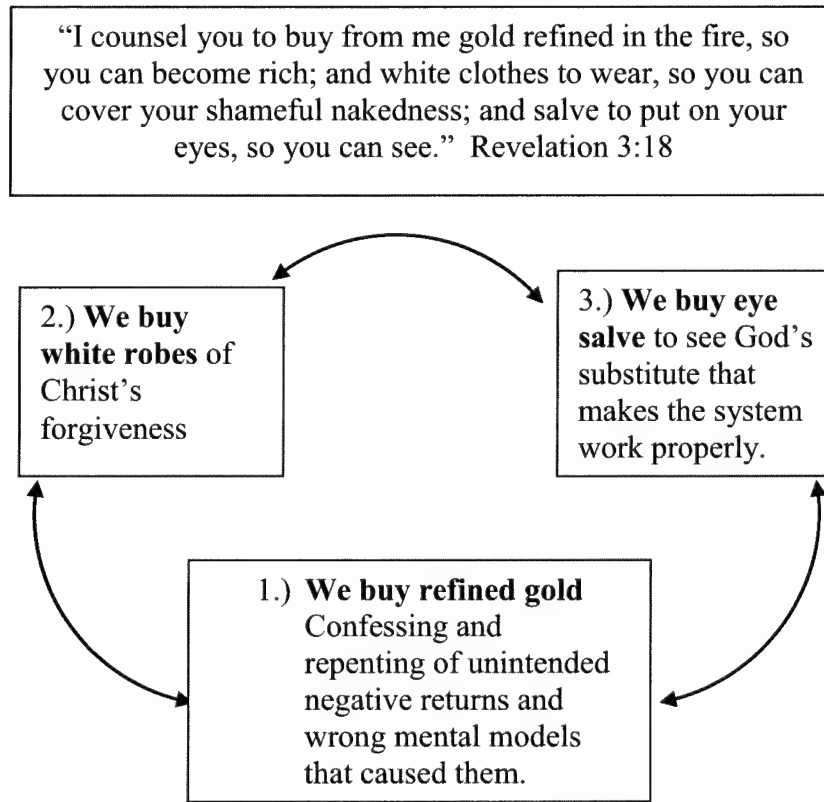
⁷⁰ "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."

tension of the age to come and the present age. It is the quality of faith that gives meaning and strength to our present endeavors.”⁷¹ This implication of tarrying with purpose, seeking alignment with God’s plan for his living system, abides in the command of Jeremiah 29:7. Seeking the peace of the city is a process – a journey that must exist with a burning patience. It also helps us recognize that seeking the peace of the city is a struggle that takes place literally inch by inch. The journey is filled with joys and failures. Due to the fallenness of humanity and the presence of sin, redemption is a necessary and consistent aspect of urban ministry. “Redemption is at work when we confess and repent, receive Christ’s forgiveness, and exchange our death for his life.”⁷² Engaging in this blueprint without fail will enable the Living System Ministry practitioner to be fruitful over the long term. A visual interpretation of this redemptive method is outlined below.

⁷¹ Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City*, 45-46.

⁷² Hall, 129.

Figure 5: Redemptive Method⁷³



From the theology of the Living System Ministry practitioner, praxis is born.

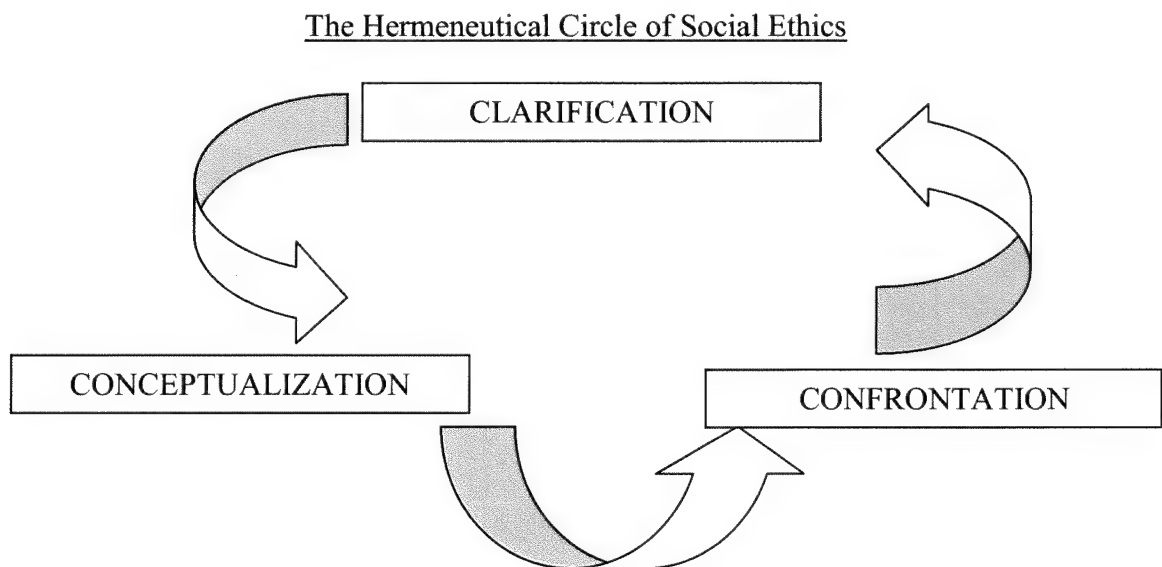
Foundational to the theology of the Living System Ministry practitioner is the reality of humanity's fallenness, the necessity of a redemptive method of ministry, and the centrality of God's shalom. God makes living systems and a holistic living system theology of urban ministry and mission is, rooted in the biblical shalom, framed by a theology of mission (peace), theology of context (presence/place), and theology of spirituality (prayer). Living System theology, Ministry and Mission require the practitioner to "unlearn." The practitioner must challenge existing mental models and live a Christian *phronesis* (mind of Christ) by means of *kenosis* (self emptying).

⁷³ Hall, 130.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN (RESEARCH METHODS)

This chapter examines methodologies and instruments by which the urban church might better understand the dynamics and opportunities of Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims. The framework for this analysis is the Hermeneutical Circle in Social Ethics Paradigm as set forth by Dr. Eldin Villafaña.¹ The paradigm consists of three steps framed by three questions. They are: Clarification (What is going on?), Conceptualization (What does the Bible and other related sources say regarding the issue?), and Confrontation (How do we respond?).



The introduction and chapter one of this discourse present the social analytical process of *Clarification*. In examining “what’s going on,” this work looks at the issue of interpersonal violence, survivors of homicide victims, the city of Boston, and the urban church in order to clarify and get a contextual understanding of this issue’s complexity.

¹ Eldin Villafaña, *The Church in the City: Confronting Issues in Contemporary Urban Society*, Doctor of Ministry residency III lectures, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary-Boston, CUME, June 15, 2011.

The theological/biblical step of *Conceptualization* is presented in chapters two, three and four of this work. Examining what the bible and other related sources say about the issue, engages systemic, theological reflection towards a living systems theology. Lastly, Chapter Five of this discourse engages the strategic step of *Confrontation*. This area looks at the urban church's response to the issue; how she can cultivate Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims.

Continuing within the conceptualization stage, we will now highlight the following areas: a living system/systems thinking approach in conceptualization, The Hexagoning Process and Learning Team Engagement, Peaceseekers: Cultivating Partnerships for Preventing Violence and Promoting God's Peace, and Reflections on Doing Living System Theology.

A Living System/Systems Thinking Approach to Conceptualization

In nurturing Living Systems Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, a living system/systems thinking approach provides the methodology for exploration of this complex issue. In *The Cat and the Toaster*, Hall conceptualizes the three types of ministry practitioners. They are: technicians, systems actors and systems thinkers.²

Technicians are ministry practitioners who live their lives with a strong focus on low-level tasks and constructs. Good technicians are vital to any ministry when their role and activities are carefully implanted into the living system and how it really works to produce fruit. System actors intuitively work appropriately in the complexity of living systems. Systems thinkers use high-level perception, intuition or subconscious understanding to go beyond the limits of the conscious mind but then cognitively recapture what has been learned in order to apply that learning to future ministry.³

² Hall, 226.

³ Hall, 227-231.

As Living System Ministry practitioners participate with God as His life flows through His living system, these practitioners must be equipped to do so. “Christian systems thinkers can use their understanding to help guide churches and organizations to work in harmony with the living system order in the city or the culture.”⁴ This is a significant theme that develops as the author engages this thesis project.

Senge sets forth five disciplines of systems thinking in conceptualization of the learning organization. They are: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking.⁵ The team learning concept is key as the intelligence of the group is always greater than any one individual. The learning team that contributed to this project was committed to a common process, thinking insightfully together about this complex issue. Incorporating this methodology, through a learning team and Hexagoning process, informs the philosophy of Peaceseekers as we endeavor to nurture Living Systems Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church.

The Hexagoning Process and Learning Team Engagement

The Hexagoning process began with constructing a learning team. The learning team consisted of members from the board of advisors of Peaceseekers, church leadership and survivors of murder victims from Greater Boston area churches. This author decided upon the population to be included in the Hexagoning process based upon a review of the literature, feedback from clergy, Peaceseekers board of advisors, lay leaders and survivors. Participants were recruited through in-person contacts, as well as

⁴ Hall, 232.

⁵ These concepts are outlined on pages 46-51 of this discourse.

email and hard copy invitations. Invitations were extended in collaboration with Peaceseekers, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Alumni Association (GCTS) and the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute (LDBPI). Recruitment flyers contained the language of "focus group," inviting participants to be engaged in a discussion entitled, *Urban Violence: What's the Church Got to Do with It?* Three groups were scheduled as follows: group one for clergy and lay leaders, group two for clergy and group three for survivors of murder victims. Group times and dates were scheduled based upon consultation with the populations invited to participate. Light refreshments were served. Hexagoning groups one and two convened at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Center for Urban Ministerial Education. Hexagoning group three did not meet. The time that was scheduled conflicted with a violence related issue that was happening in the community at the time. Many survivors of homicide victims were involved in this issue and were not able to participate in the Hexagoning session. While this was a missed opportunity to hear from a group of survivors, there were survivors in the other two groups.

The Hexagoning groups convened with the goal of examining the church's role in the issue of urban violence. This author opened groups one and two with participant introductions and a brief PowerPoint presentation (Please see appendix A for PowerPoint) including the following: an overview, purpose of focus group/Hexagoning process, personal testimony of how violence has impacted this author, and definitions of violence and peace as expressed biblically and generally. At the end of the presentation this author asked: What questions come to mind when you think about violence, peace and the church?

Hexagoning group one came up with twelve questions for consideration (Please see Appendix B for Questions). After reviewing all of their questions and analyzing the intent of each one, they decided to work with the question: “What should the church be teaching about violence?” They felt the issue of capacity building in the church was the overarching theme, capturing the deepest need. Upon discussing this further, they rephrased the question as follows: “How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?” The counter-part to this question was determined to be: “What can hinder the church’s effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?”

Hexagoning group two came up with nine questions for consideration (Please see Appendix B for Questions). After reviewing all of their questions, they decided to work with the question: “How can the church serve as agents of God’s Shalom in the issue of urban violence?” They felt this question served to capture all of the other questions and would permit them to encompass a broad perspective. The counter-part to this question was determined to be: “What can hinder the church’s serving as agents of God’s shalom in the issue of urban violence?”

After deciding upon the positive and negative questions, the groups brainstormed responses to each question, grouping responses into categories that best fit the content in relationship to the whole. Upon identifying and grouping responses, each category was titled with an appropriate label capturing the category’s theme. In brainstorming the responses to the questions, the groupings were inserted into “process of the gospel” causal loop diagrams, building curriculum/teaching points accordingly for each of the negative variables. This process allows the group to consider

counterproductive development from works, while looking at Jesus as the model for Living Systems Ministry. Nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church arises from and in alignment with the archetype of Jesus training his disciples. Just as true discipleship permeates every area of the disciples' experience, shalom speaks of wholeness, completeness, and reconciliation to God and ones fellow man. As agents of God's shalom, the urban church serves as the disciples of the God of Peace bringing the peace of God to a fallen world. This is not a product but a process, the "process of the gospel," which proclaims the very kingdom of God.

This author assisted the group process of both Hexagoning groups by assuring that everyone participated. Each group owned the process and worked diligently together, enjoying the discussion. Upon completion of the process the results were presented back to the larger group. The responses to the Hexagoning groups are as follows:

Responses to Hexagoning Group #1

How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?

1. Identify the issues of violence (recognize the issue)
2. Prioritize/set aside time and space to learn about violence prevention and peace promotion
3. Leaders and laity receive training around violence prevention and peace promotion
4. Provide counseling for individuals affected by violence
5. teaching has a bias towards implementation/engagement
6. Providing resources for the community that address violence
7. Know its theology of violence and peace
8. Sharing information about how people can get involved in the issue
9. Networking Leaders and Sharing information
10. Life Experiences/testimony from victims and perpetrators
11. Incorporate teaching regarding violence prevention and peace promotion in Christian Education Program
12. Music Ministry intentionally conveys themes of peace and preventing violence
13. Develop Discipleship Structures that encompass peace promotion, sensitivity, trauma, grief, loss
14. Incorporate violence prevention and peace promotion in the preaching
15. Establish a safe environment for individuals to discuss issues of violence and peace
16. Mentoring support for those impacted by violence
17. The church is part of a community coalition for preventing violence/promoting peace
18. Specialized training for clergy and leadership
19. Assessment and evaluation structure for church progress and awareness
20. Provide an environment for prayer and healing
21. Creating structures of support and healing for clergy/teachers ministering to those impacted
22. Provide refreshments for learning sessions
23. Create church based mechanisms for addressing her violence and creating a culture of peace
24. Provide a network for external resources
25. Maintaining ethical boundaries (mandated reporting, confidentiality, etc)

Groupings⁶

- A. Creating a comprehensive spiritual formation structure that incorporates incarnational practice. (11, 13, 14, 7, 12, 10, 5, 8)
- B. Creating mechanisms for outreach and internal support (22, 16, 9, 6, 4, 24, 23, 17)
- C. Providing specialized training, assessment and evaluation for leadership and process (3, 19, 18, 25)
- D. Creating an infrastructure of awareness, support and healing. (2, 1, 21, 15, 20)

What can hinder the church's effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?

- 1. Don't know how to talk about it
- 2. No desire to address violence. It's not our problem
- 3. Other things are more important
- 4. Church expectations do not include this issue
- 5. Staff already spread too thin
- 6. It takes time and commitment that we don't have.
- 7. Parents don't want children talking about violence
- 8. Don't know what the bible teaches
- 9. unaware of community resources
- 10. Inability to recognize the issue
- 11. Leadership doesn't want to be trained.
- 12. No desire to network with other churches
- 13. Inadequate understanding of discipleship
- 14. Lack of community involvement
- 15. Lack of evaluation/assessment structure
- 16. Environment is not safe to discuss these issues
- 17. People are judged if they are violently affiliated
- 18. no budget for this
- 19. No sense of ethical boundaries

Groupings⁷

- E. Lack of involvement in community kingdom engagement (14, 12, 9)
- F. Financial Limitations (18)
- G. Inadequate understanding/ignorance regarding issue (1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 13)
- H. Other priorities/expectations (3, 4)
- I. Time/availability limitations (5, 6, 11)

⁶ These Hexagoning categories are illustrated in clusters on pages 128-130.

⁷ These Hexagoning categories are illustrated in clusters on pages 131-134.

- J. Lack of evaluation/assessment structures (15)
- K. Relational/Communication Limitations (16, 17, 19)

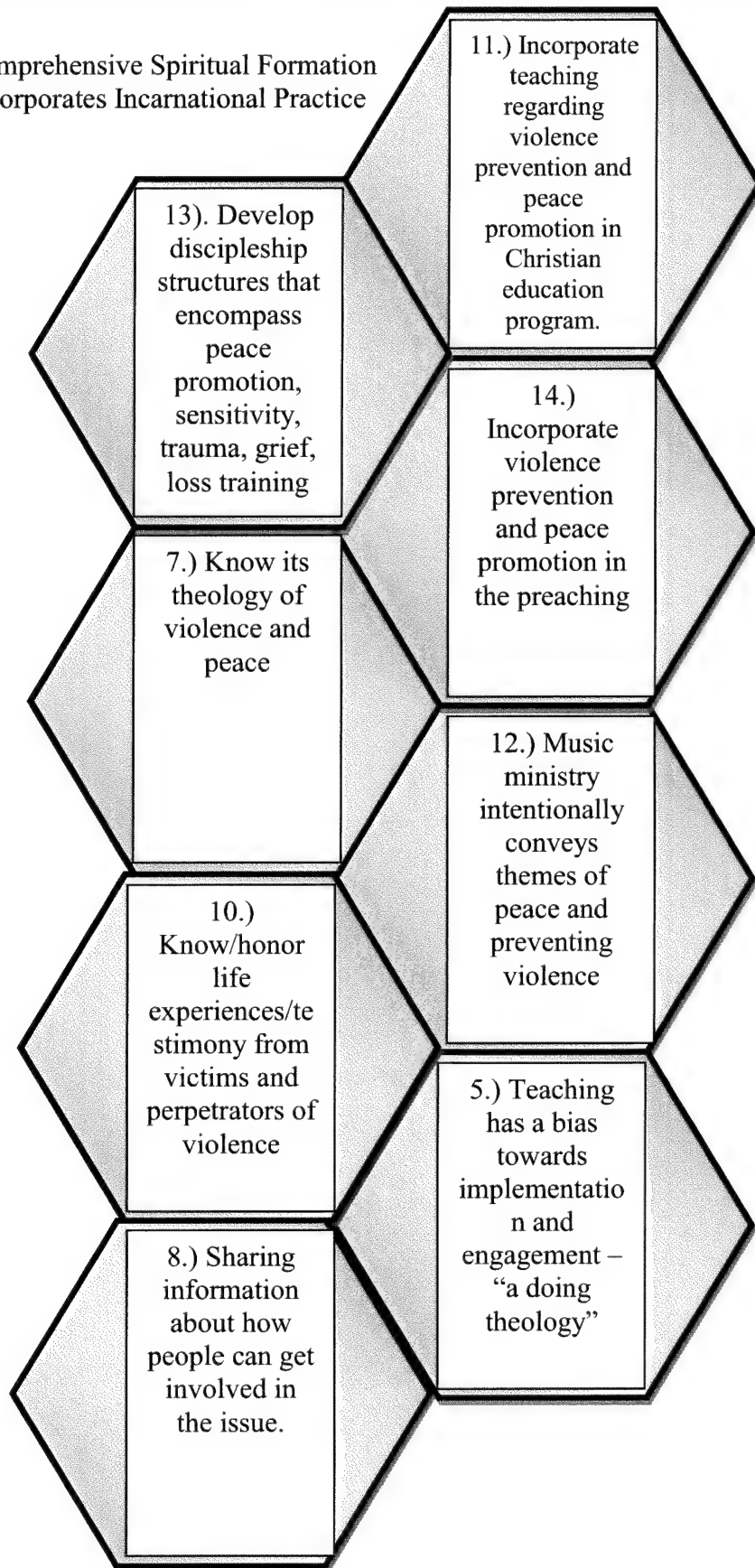
Process of the Gospel/Telling the Story

1. Observation - Providing specialized training, assessment and evaluation for leadership and process
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20 – The Great Commission
 - b. Matthew 5:1-12 - The Sermon on the Mount
2. Positive Regard - Developing Mechanisms for Outreach and Internal Support
3. Relevant Communication - Developing Mechanisms for Outreach and Internal Support
4. Mutual Meeting of perceived needs – Creating a comprehensive spiritual formation structure that incorporates incarnational practice
5. Meeting of Basic Needs - Creating a comprehensive spiritual formation structure that incorporates incarnational practice
6. Multiplication – Creating an infrastructure of awareness support and healing

Hexagoning Question Group #1
(Positive)

How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?

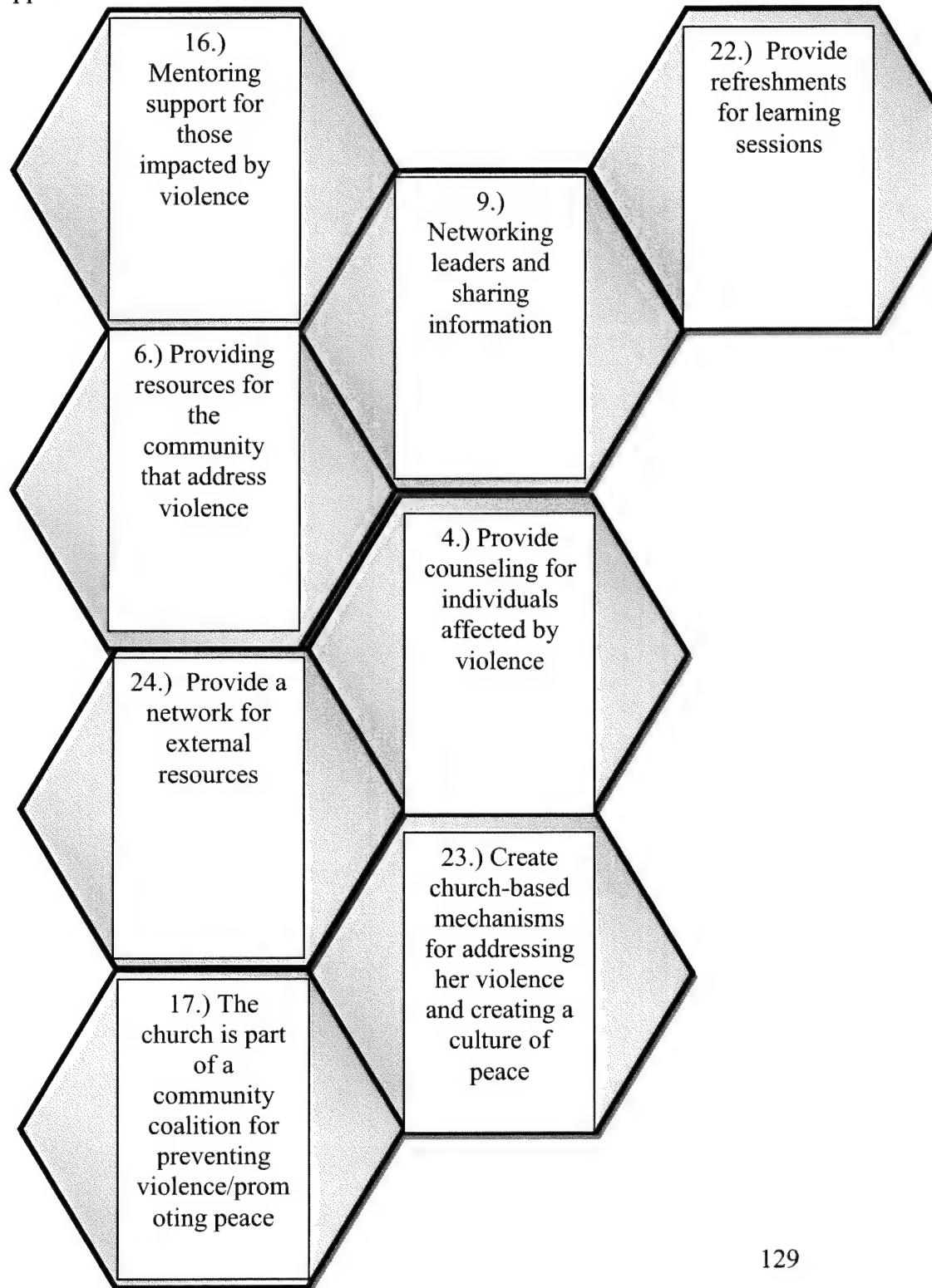
A.) Creating A Comprehensive Spiritual Formation Structure That Incorporates Incarnational Practice



**Hexagoning Question Group #1
(Positive)**

How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?

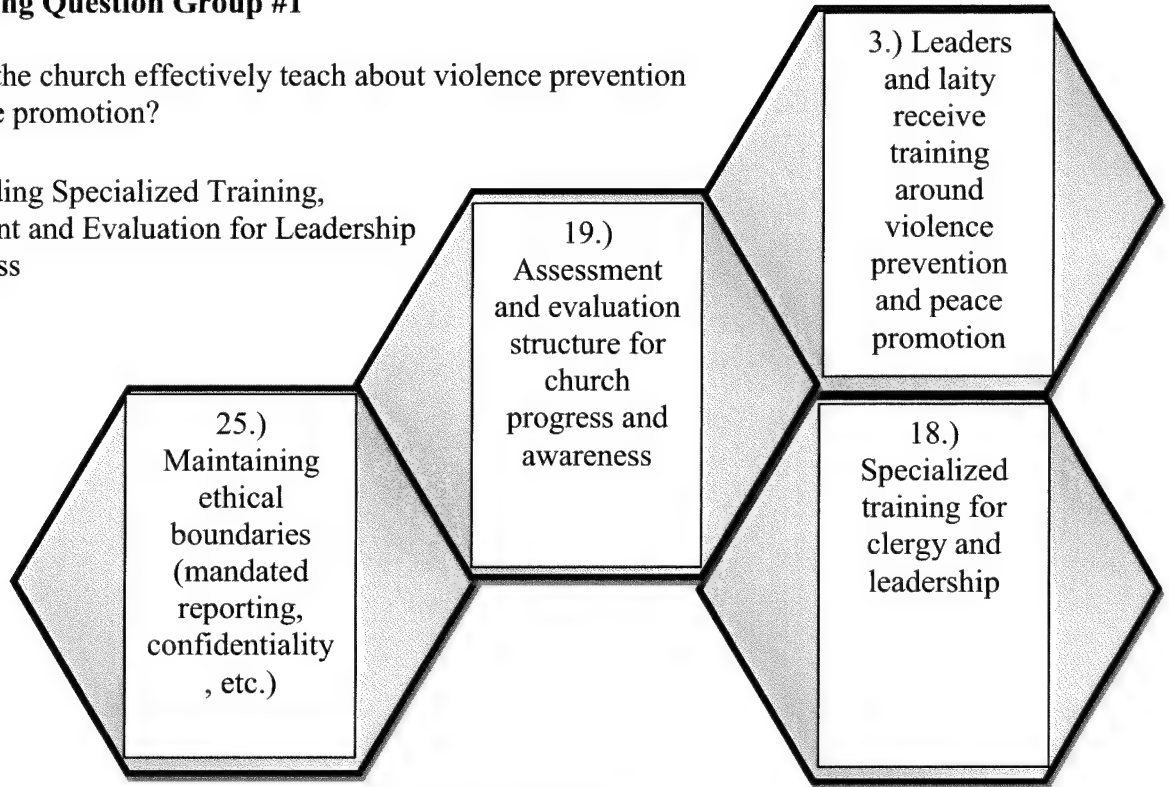
**B.) Creating Mechanisms for Outreach
and Internal Support**



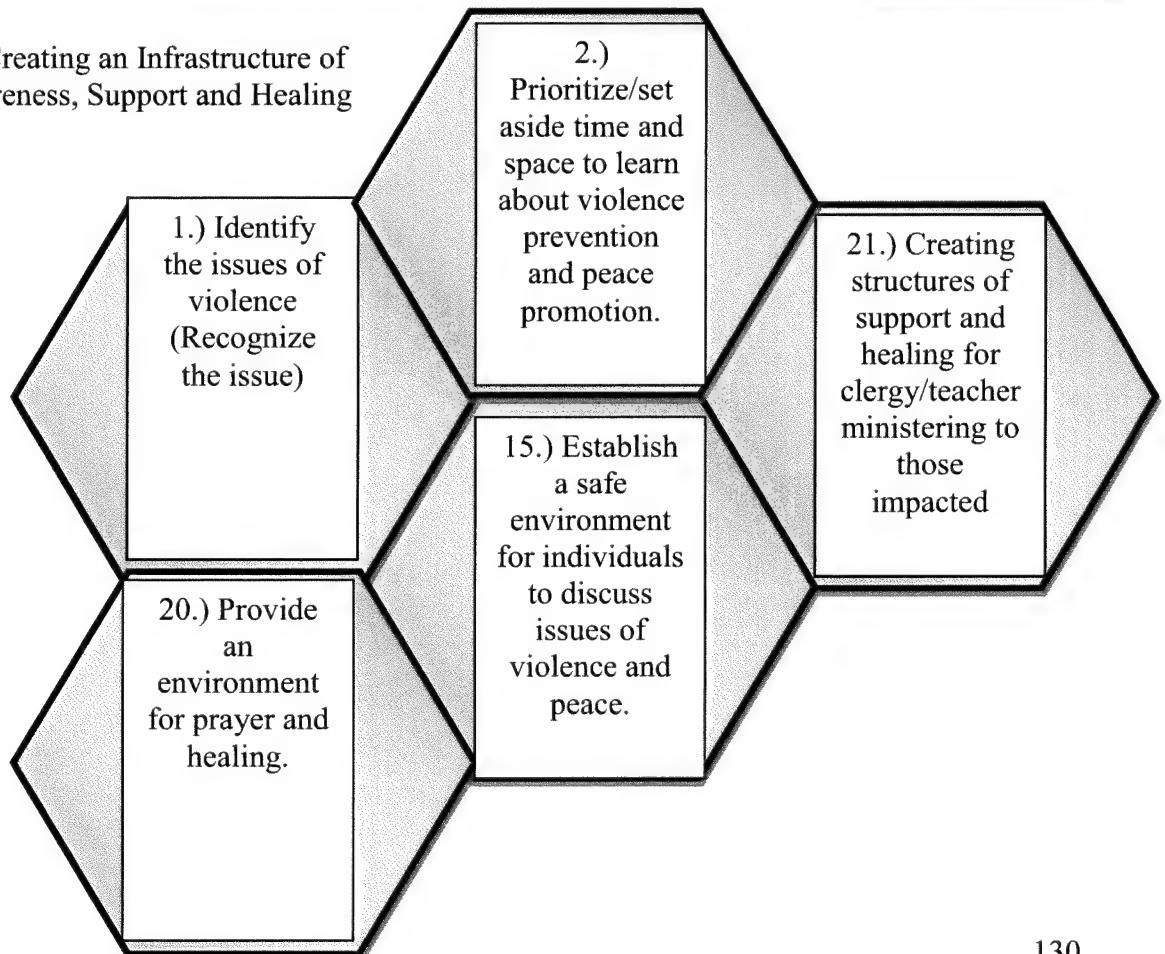
**Hexagoning Question Group #1
(Positive)**

How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?

C.) Providing Specialized Training, Assessment and Evaluation for Leadership and Process



D.) Creating an Infrastructure of Awareness, Support and Healing

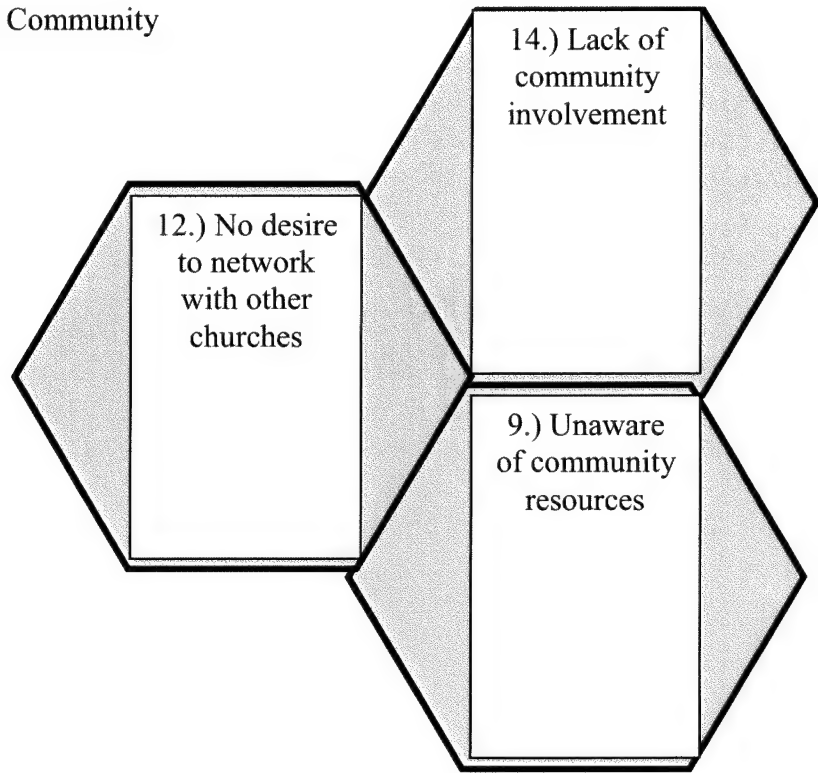


Hexagoning Question Group #1

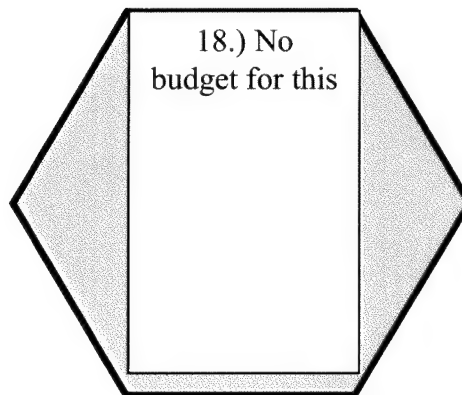
(Negative)

What can hinder the church's effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?

E.) Lack of Involvement in Community
Kingdom Engagement



F.) Financial Limitations

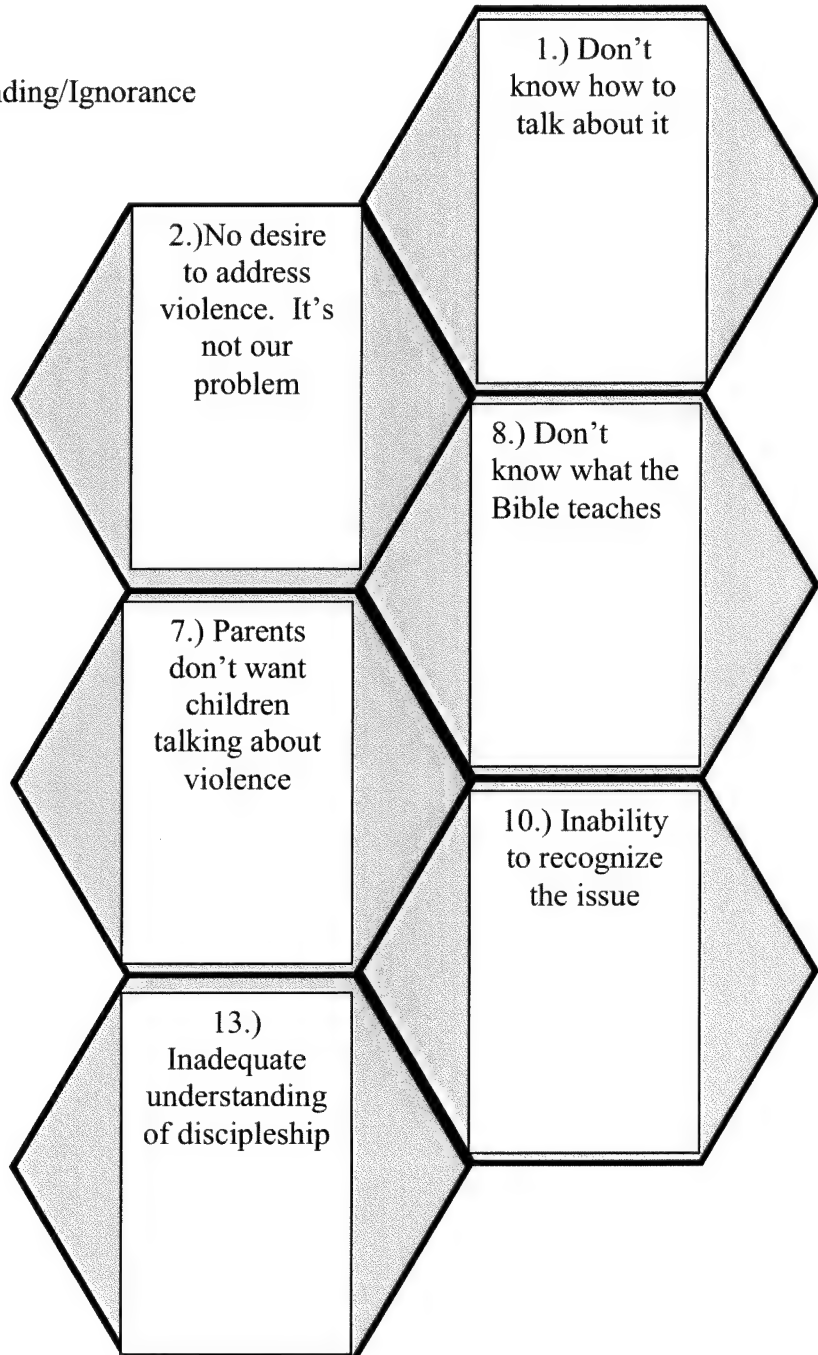


Hexagoning Question Group #1

(Negative)

What can hinder the church's effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?

G.) Inadequate Understanding/Ignorance
Regarding Issue

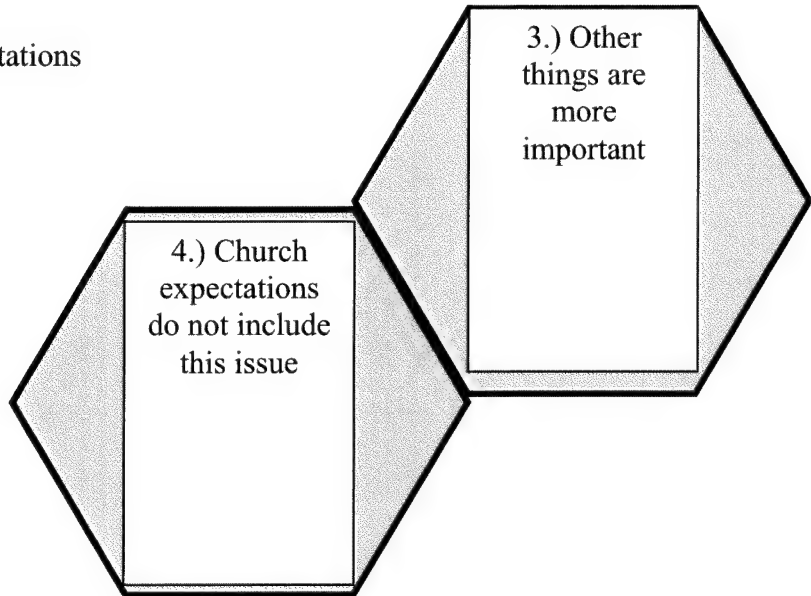


Hexagoning Question Group #1

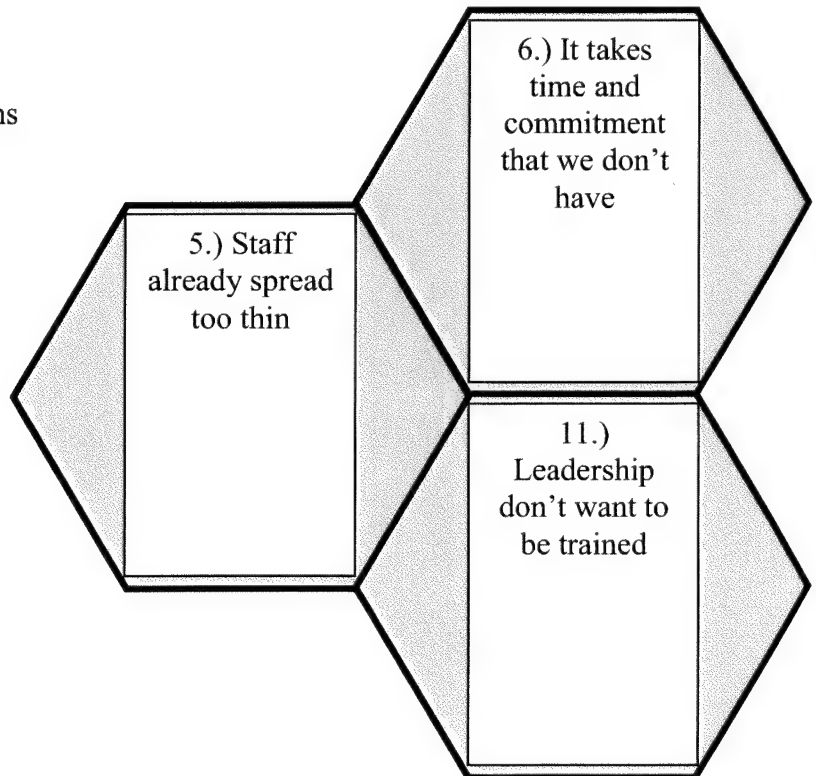
(Negative)

What can hinder the church's effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?

H.) Other Priorities/Expectations



I.) Time/Availability Limitations

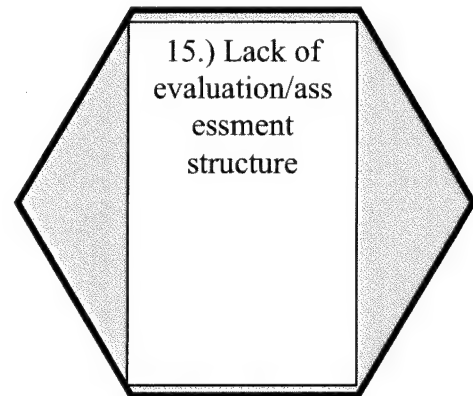


Hexagoning Question Group #1

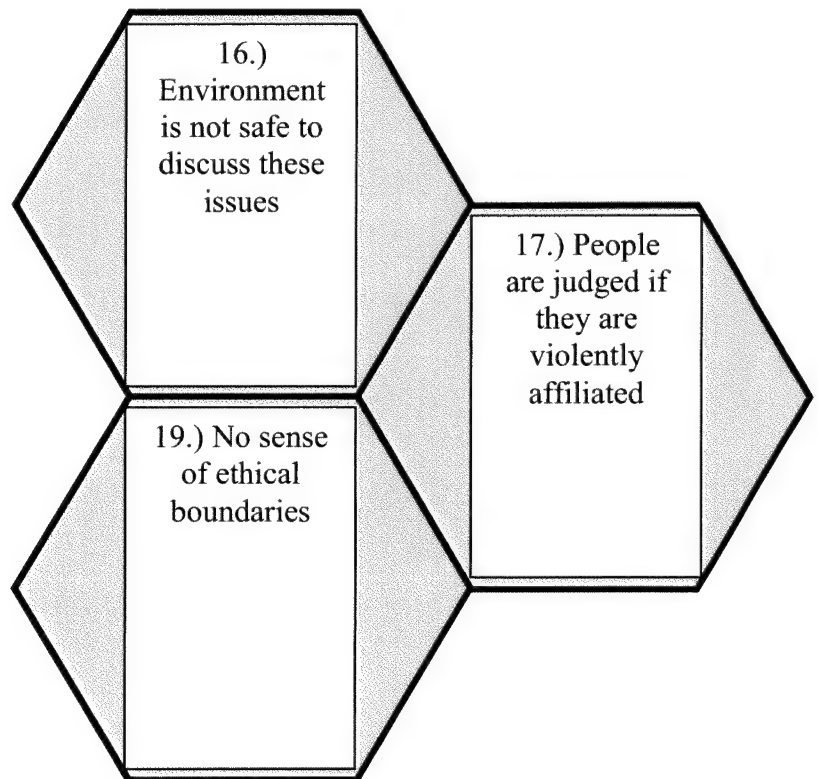
(Negative)

What can hinder the church's effective teaching about violence prevention and peace promotion?

J.) Lack of Evaluation/Assessment Structures



K.) Relational/Communication Limitations



Hexagoning Group #2

Upon completion of the brainstorming of questions, the group decided to work on the following question:

How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the issue of Urban Violence?

1. Change the goal of the church to ministry outside of the church building versus maintaining programs inside of the church
2. Church must educate itself/be educated on the system of violence
3. To find the gifts of the people that make up the church so they can be agents
4. Utilize the Full Body of Christ and its gifts to address the issue of violence (Breaking out of the boxes i.e. cooking, etc)
5. Be transparent about violence and how it manifests itself in the church and in the world (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, social)
6. Acknowledge and work to prevent and address diverse forms of violence (murder, suicide, DV, language, mentally, physically, socially, denominations)
7. Use social media/programming to promote peace and Justice
8. Incorporate the teaching of theology of violence and peace from the pulpit and in Christian Education Structures, auxiliary ministries (including discipleship)
9. Translating learning theology to doing theology – “incarnational” (being clear about what this looks like
10. Network churches to address issue and share resources (prayer, fellowship, strategy, community consciousness)
11. Develop relationships with other churches (address competition, beauty salon ethos).
12. Create sustainable block parties, community events, parades, etc. to build community/accountability
13. Create institutes to prepare the church to do collaborative work for social change “floating learning”
14. Promotion of the abundant life promised by Christ
15. Outreach to those affected by violence – Survivors/perpetrators
16. Investigate outreach models that are effective (best, promising and sustainable practices)
17. Define sustainable within church belief system and practice
18. Partner with other systems for violence prevention and peace promotion (criminal justice, health, etc)
19. Create evaluation system/mechanism so we know how we are doing as a church
20. Create safe spaces to heal and be transparent.

Groupings⁸

- A. Redefining outreach strategies and methodologies (3, 15, 4, 1)
- B. Building Understanding, wise interventions, knowledge/church capacity to address violence promote peace (20, 2, 6, 5)
- C. Implementing a community-centric agenda for promoting peace and preventing violence (19, 7, 16, 13, 12)
- D. Defining and Implementing theology of violence and peace (9, 8, 14, 17)
- E. Establishing networks and partnerships for preventing violence and promoting peace (11, 10, 18)

What can hinder the church's service as agents of God's shalom in the issue urban violence?

- 1. Competition within and between churches
- 2. Press Conference Ministry
- 3. Event based rather than focus on the system
- 4. inadequate theology
- 5. Trauma
- 6. Fear
- 7. Don't know how
- 8. No desire to address violence – someone else's issue not ours
- 9. Finances – presumption of needing a lot of money
- 10. other priorities
- 11. Tradition
- 12. Irrelevant/inadequate approaches to address the issue
- 13. Role inflexibility (not my title, role or concern)
- 14. stress
- 15. Stereotyping or perceived identity or community role of church
- 16. Mental Health Issues
- 17. Lack of safe spaces

Groupings⁹

- F. Lack of knowledge of how to handle the issue (7, 3, 12, 4)
- G. Need for healing spaces (17, 6, 14, 16, 5)
- H. Perception of financial limitations (9)
- I. Other Priorities (2, 10, 8, 11, 1, 15, 13)

Process of the Gospel/Telling the Story

⁸ These Hexagoning categories are illustrated in clusters on pages 138-141.

⁹ These Hexagoning categories are illustrated in clusters on pages 142-144.

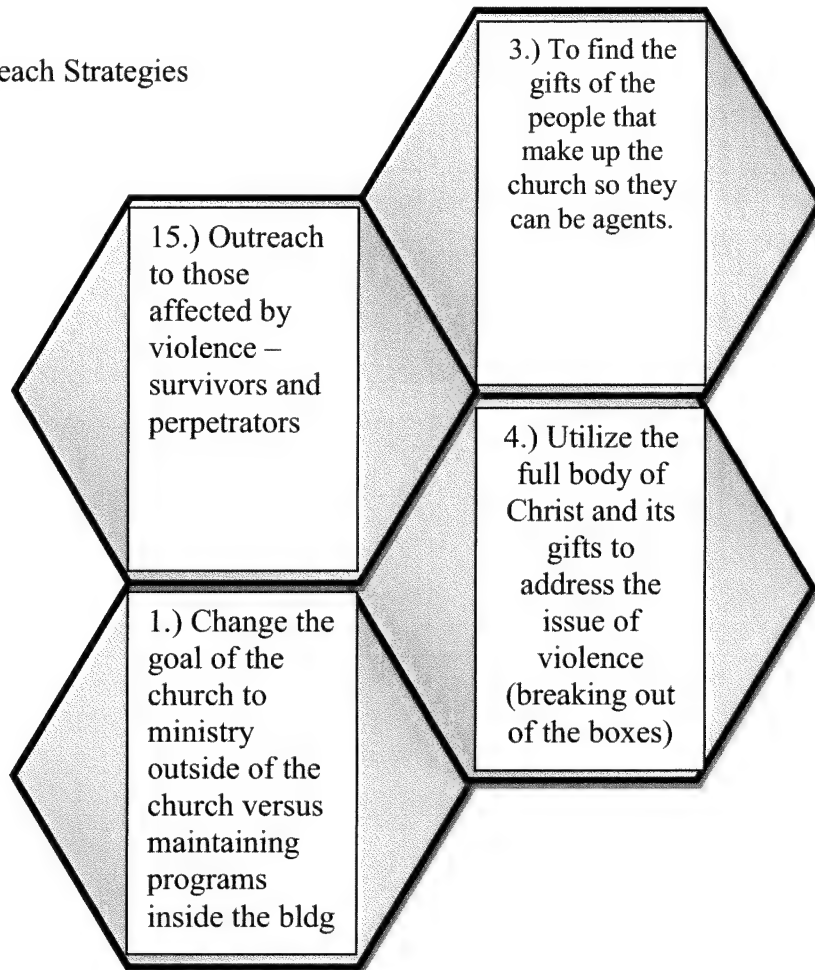
1. Observation - Building understanding, wise interventions, evaluation, knowledge/church capacity to address violence/promote peace
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20 – The Great Commission
 - b. Matthew 5:1-12 - The Sermon on the Mount
2. Positive Regard - Implementing a community-centric agenda for promoting peace and preventing violence
3. Relevant Communication – Establishing networks and partnerships for preventing violence and promoting peace
4. Mutual Meeting of perceived needs – Implementing a community-centric agenda for promoting peace and preventing violence
5. Meeting of Basic Needs – Defining and implementing a biblical theology of violence and peace
6. Multiplication – Redefining outreach strategies and methodologies

Hexagoning Question Group #2

(Positive)

How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the Issue of Urban Violence?

A.) Redefining Outreach Strategies and Methodologies

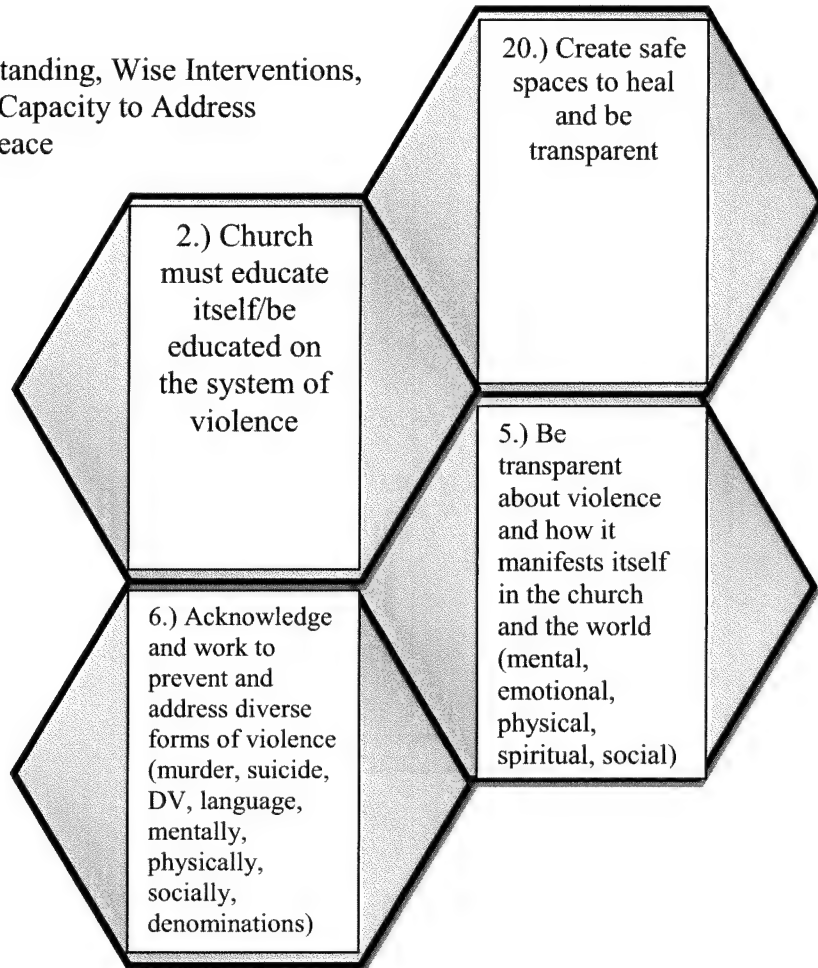


Hexagoning Question Group #2

(Positive)

How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the Issue of Urban Violence?

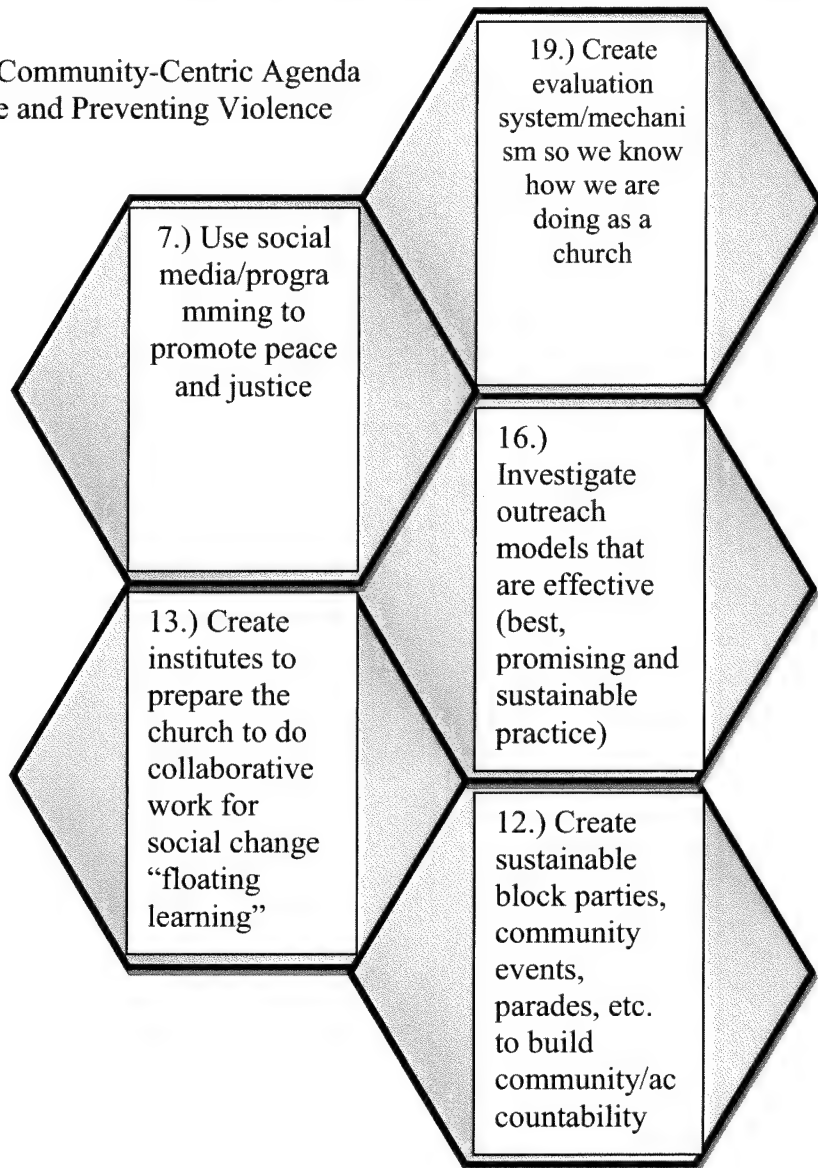
B.) Building Understanding, Wise Interventions,
Knowledge/Church Capacity to Address
Violence/Promote Peace



**Hexagoning Question Group #2
(Positive)**

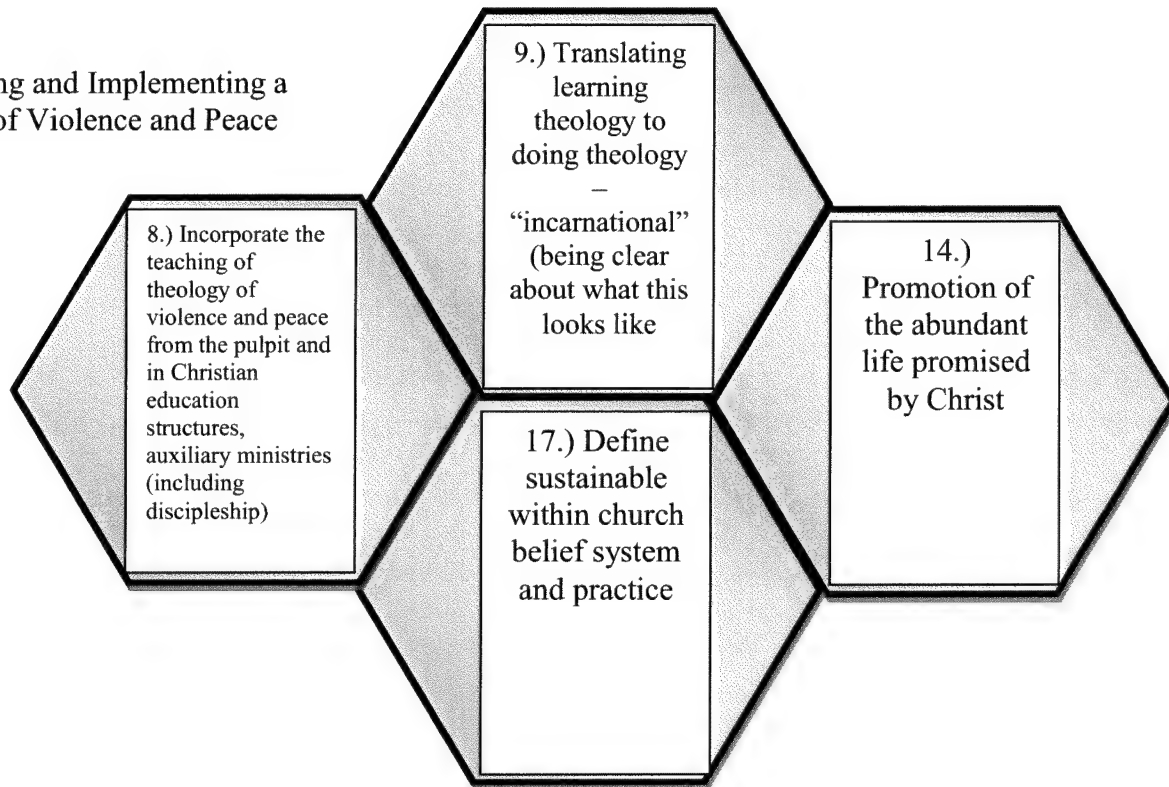
How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the Issue of Urban Violence?

C.) Implementing a Community-Centric Agenda
for Promoting Peace and Preventing Violence

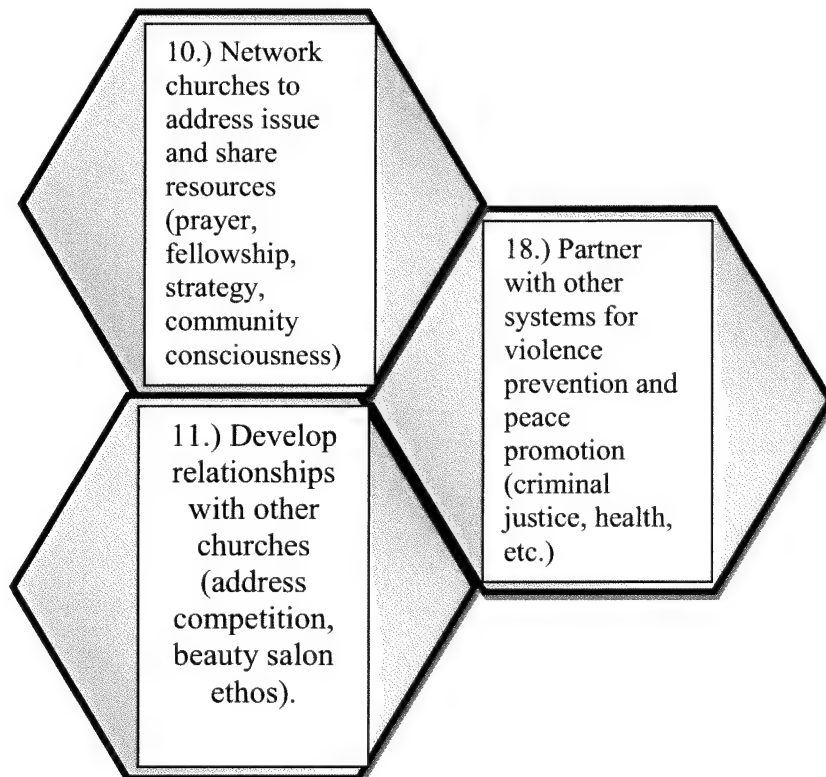


**Hexagoning Question Group #2
(Positive)**

**D.) Defining and Implementing a
Theology of Violence and Peace**



E.) Establishing Networks and Partnerships for Preventing Violence and Promoting Peace

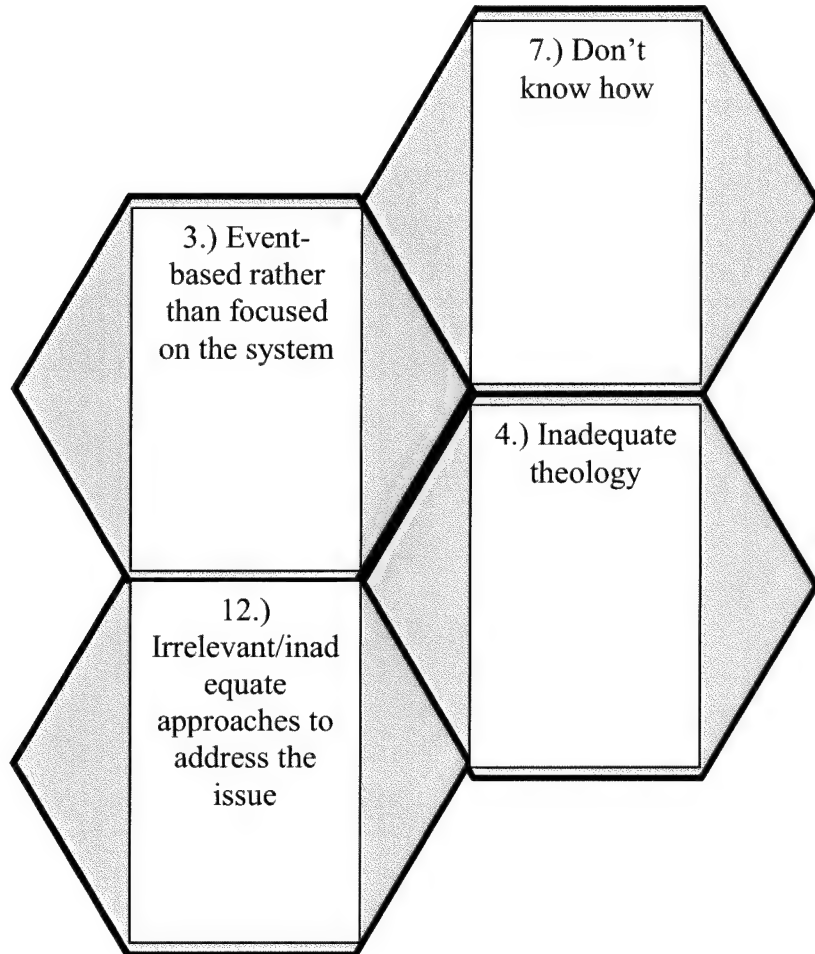


Hexagoning Question Group #2

(Negative)

What can hinder the church's service as agents of God's shalom in the issue of urban violence?

F.) Lack of Knowledge of How to Handle the Issue

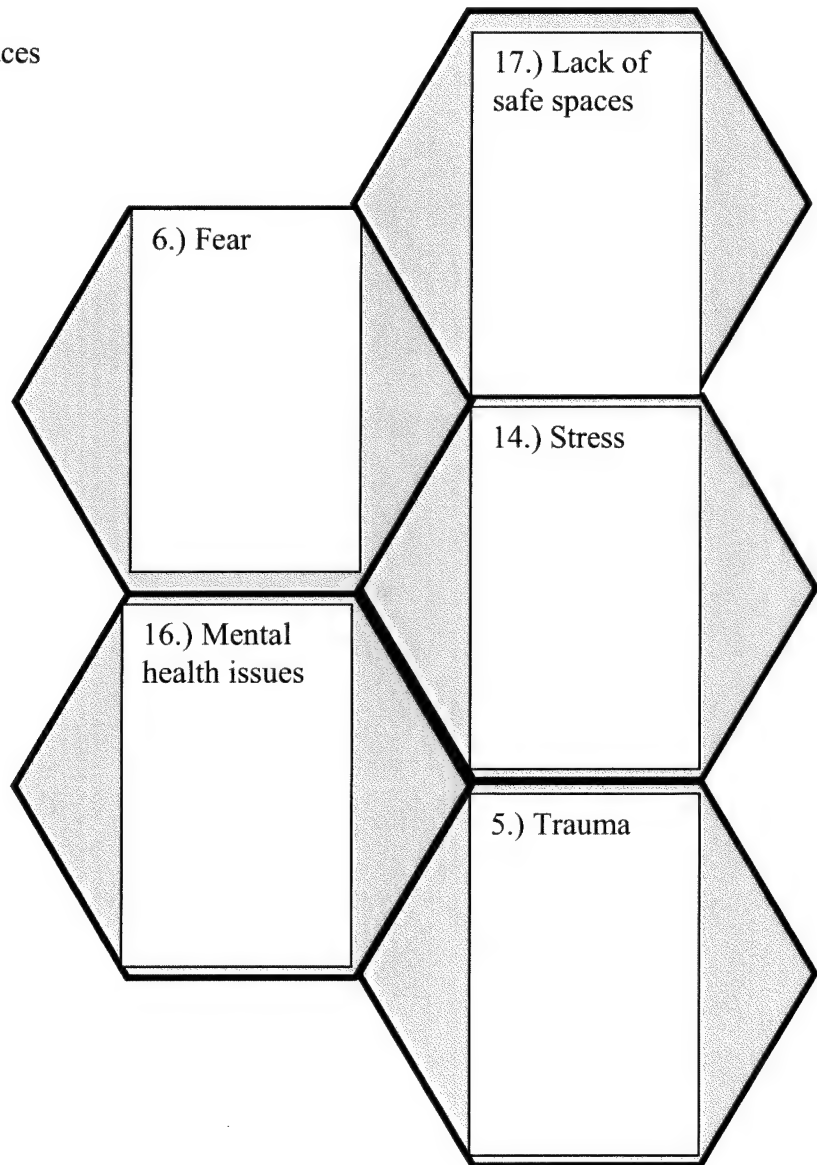


Hexagoning Question Group #2

(Negative)

What can hinder the church's service as agents of God's shalom in the issue of urban violence?

G.) Need for Healing Spaces

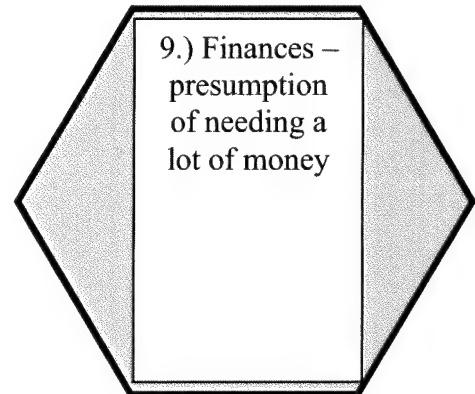


Hexagoning Question Group #2

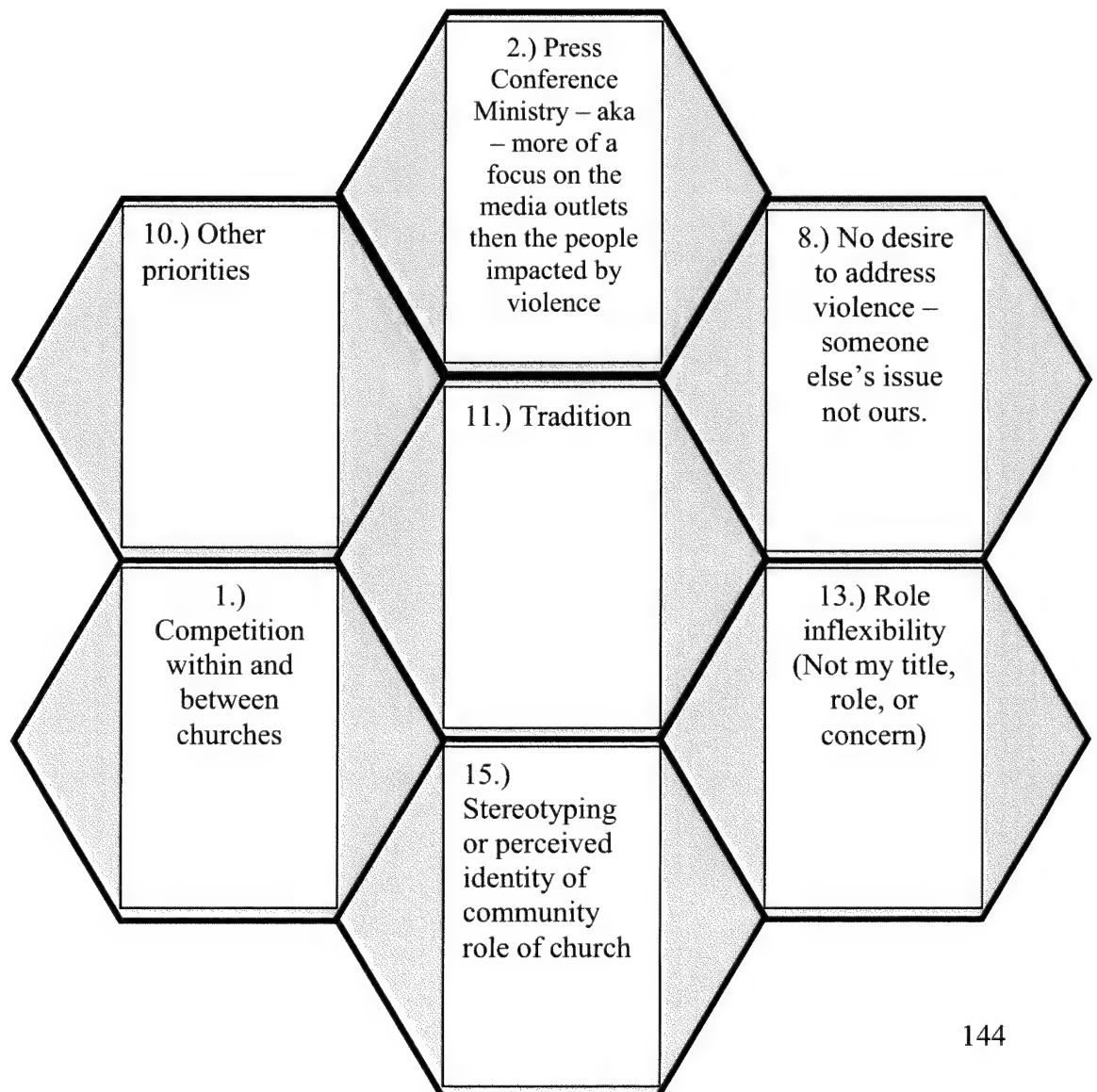
(Negative)

What can hinder the church's service as agents of God's shalom in the issue of urban violence?

H.) Perception of Financial Limitations



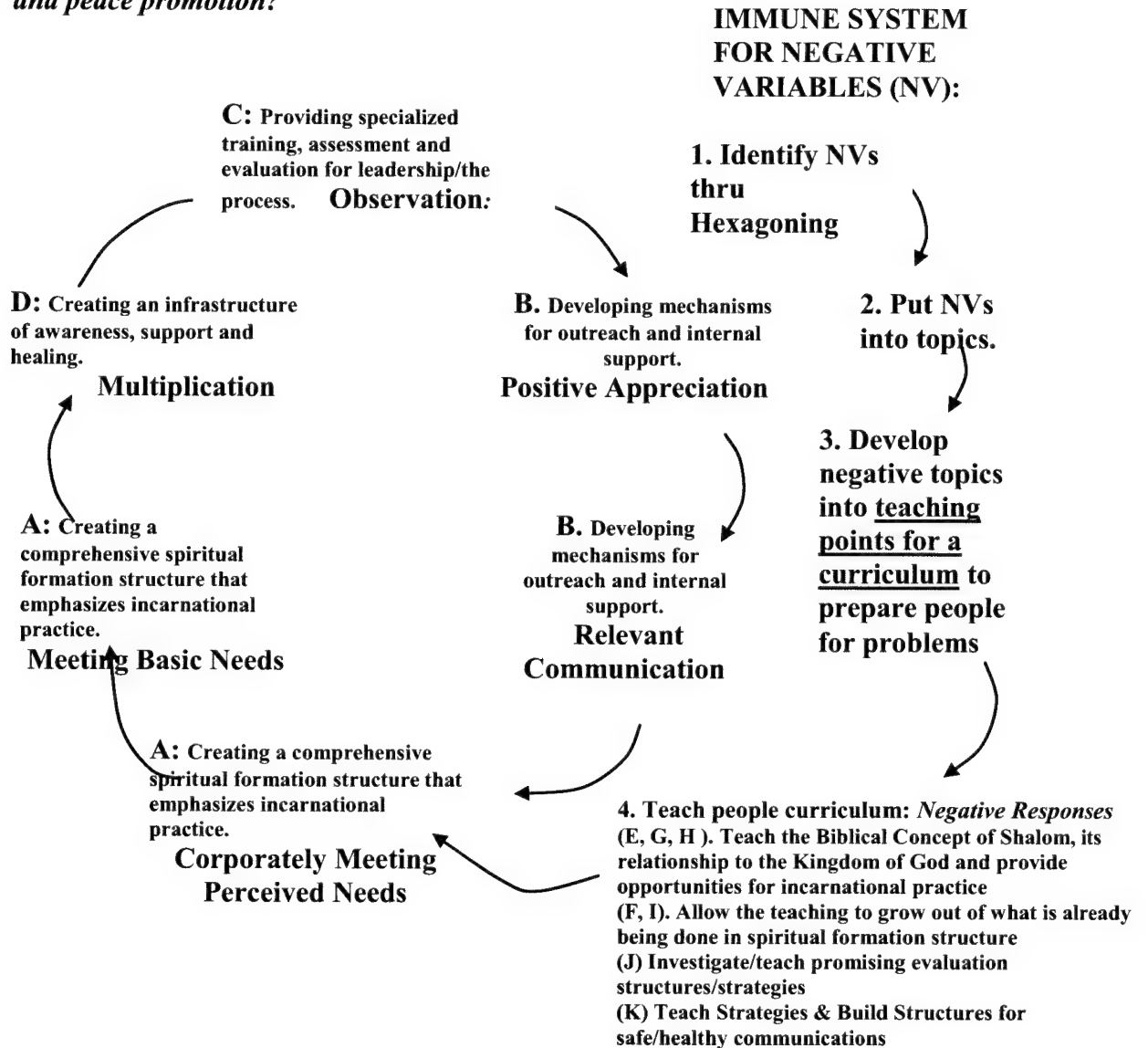
I.) Other Priorities



Hexagoning Group #1

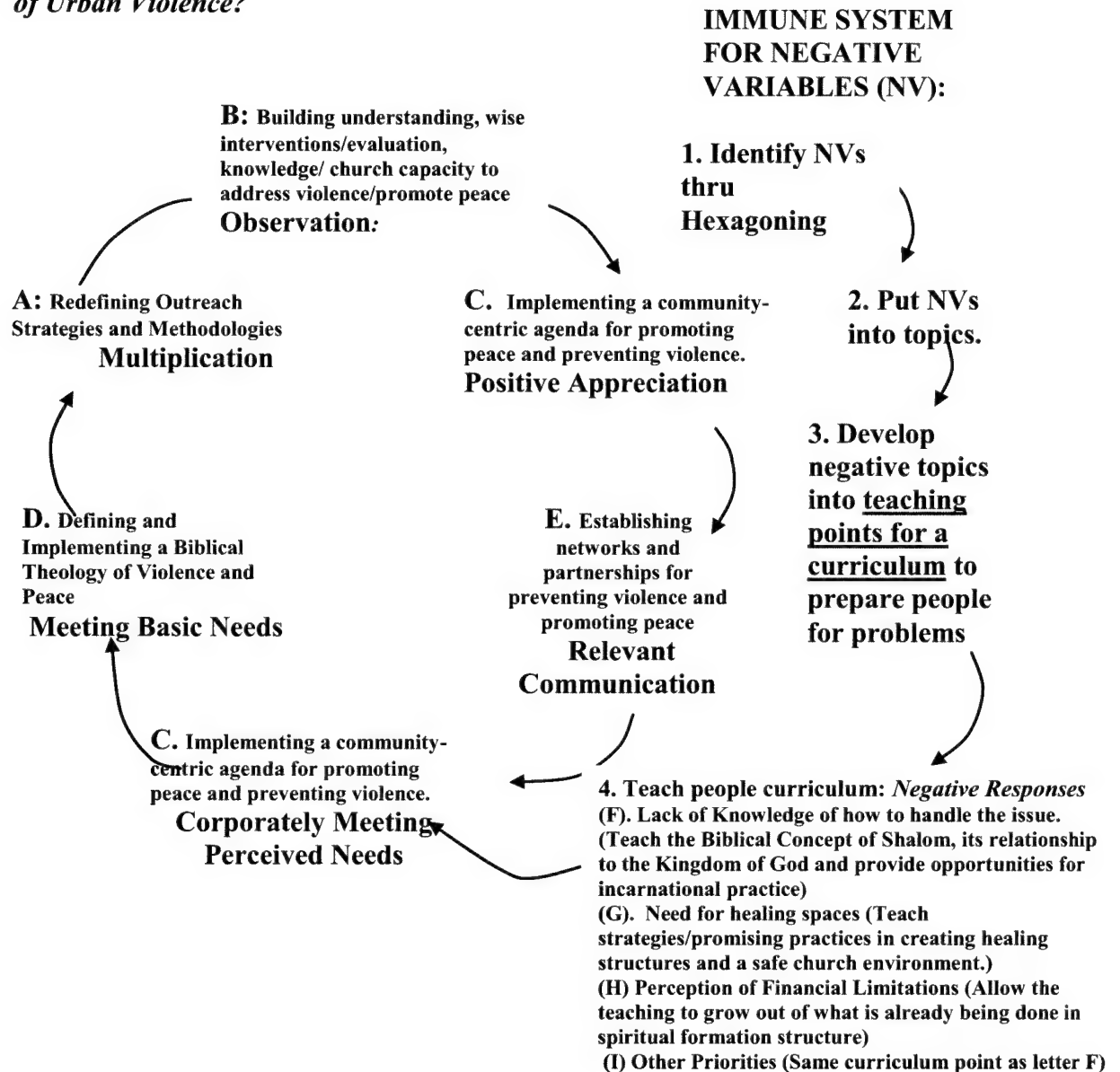
The Process of the Gospel Paradigm

QUESTION: *How can the church effectively teach about violence prevention and peace promotion?*



Causal Loop Diagram Hexagoning Group #2
The Process of the Gospel Paradigm

QUESTION: *How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the issue of Urban Violence?*



Combined Group “Process of the Gospel” Causal Loop Story

The process of the gospel causal loop story was combined for both groups yielded the following summary:

(Hexagoning group #1 is reflected by “a” and Hexagoning Group #2 is reflected by “b”)

1. Observation
 - a. Providing Specialized Training, Assessment and Evaluation for Leaders and the Process
 - b. Building Understanding, Wise Interventions/Evaluation, Knowledge/Church Capacity to Address Violence and Promote Peace
2. Positive Appreciation/Regard
 - a. Developing Mechanisms for Outreach and Internal Support
 - b. Implementing a Community-Centric Agenda for Promoting Peace and Preventing Violence
3. Relevant Communication
 - a. Developing Mechanisms for Outreach and Internal Support
 - b. Establishing Networks and Partnerships for Preventing Violence and Promoting Peace
4. Perceived Needs
 - a. Creating Comprehensive Spiritual Formation Structure that Emphasizes Incarnational Practice
 - b. Implementing a Community-Centric Agenda for Promoting Peace and Preventing Violence
5. Basic Needs
 - a. Creating Comprehensive Spiritual Formation Structure that Emphasizes Incarnational Practice
 - b. Defining and Implementing a Biblical Theology of Violence and Peace
6. Multiplication
 - a. Creating an Infrastructure of Awareness, Support and Healing
 - b. Redefining Outreach Strategies and Methodologies

Reflections on the Hexagoning Process and Learning Team Engagement

In Chapter One of this discourse, the relationship between Public Health and Criminal Justice was illustrated within the prevention continuum of primary (upfront), secondary (in the thick) and tertiary (after the fact) prevention. This continuum helps to illustrate the holistic nature of responding to problems within living systems. The clergy, lay leaders and survivors that took part in this process function within all three of the prevention continuum categories. While the time they spend serving within each category varies, they discussed the tension that exists for those who function heavily within each aspect of the continuum. For this reason, I will use this structure to frame my reflections on the Hexagoning process and learning team engagement.

Upfront

“Upfront” prevention includes approaches that take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization. In the initialization of the Hexagoning/team learning process, the author prioritized individual, in-person meetings with those who showed interest in the project. The author found that those who she was able to meet with prior to engagement with the learning team or Hexagoning process had a greater attendance/participation rate in the process. This time of relational engagement proved vital for this process. Upon further reflection on the group process, the author found that those church leaders that function more in the upfront prevention realm desired biblical teaching strategies and tangible principles for preventing violence. They also discussed the need for help in this area realizing that only a small percentage of what is communicated in their sermons actually “sticks,” is remembered and practiced by congregants. They also spoke in the group process about the politics of the Church,

diversity of theologies and understanding the impact of the developmental continuum of congregations. Clergy/church leaders felt that no matter how many people they help/support, they are not able to help everyone. They often carry guilt or frustration about this because these often become the areas that are accentuated or criticized by others. While these themes can be seen within the Hexagoning categories created, reflecting on the process allows the author to share additional rich nuances of team learning that cannot be fully illustrated within the Hexagoning labels.

In the Thick

“In the thick” prevention includes the immediate responses after violence has occurred to deal with the consequences in the short-term. The clergy, lay leaders and survivors that serve “in the thick,” who participated in the process, expressed the feeling of helplessness that often comes over them in the immediate aftermath of violence. They discussed the humility they encounter when confronted with the abiding pain and profound anger “in the thick” of it. For the author, this reflects the crippling of the works model. Those who constantly function in a mental model of “how can I fix this?,” come face to face with the reality of a situation that “can’t be fixed,” in that, the life that has been taken is gone. Clergy, lay leaders and survivors shared the high emotional costs for them “in the thick.” Safe spaces are needed for clergy to be vulnerable, to process their feelings and deal with the frustrations of fulfilling their charges. Survivors need safe spiritual spaces where they can grieve without being re-traumatized by “Christianese”, such as: “He’s in a better place,” “It was God’s will,” “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Survivors also shared that statements like “she was in the wrong place at the wrong time,” are insensitive and often have no validity. Why is a

child walking home from school in the wrong place at the wrong time? Shouldn't our streets be safe enough for children to walk home from school? As the learning team and Hexagoning process dwelt "in the thick" it brought this author to the crux of this thesis, how is Living Systems Ministry and Mission nurtured with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church? It was at this point in the group process that I observed a solemn humility that yielded a caring for one another and a flourishing of hope in the power of shalom.

After the Fact

"After the fact" prevention includes the long-term responses after violence to deal with the lasting consequences and treatment interventions. As the team learning and Hexagoning process neared its conclusion, the group expressed the helpfulness of the process and appreciation for a safe place to share and think critically not just about the work they do but the lives they live. Clergy shared that seminary largely does not prepare them for ministry with survivors of homicide victims or communities impacted by violence. Survivors expressed their displeasure with learning that clergy aren't equipped to deal with these issues. Each participant began to see themselves as a survivor, whether they had personally lost a loved one to violence or not. For any loss in a living system is a loss for the whole community. While honoring the truth that everyone grieves differently, and no two survivors are the same, the deep and abiding pain of loss was felt by all participants. They acknowledged their connection as a family of God and the need for each of them to take ownership of this issue. They expressed excitement with reconnecting and highlighted the need for self-care.

The Hexagoning process and learning team engagement took longer than was expected. The nature of this topic was emotionally difficult and each step in the Hexagoning process required focused engagement. The individuals involved in the team had multiple responsibilities and it proved difficult to reconvene the full group for follow-up. Reporting back to the group needed to be done in various forms including, telephone conferencing, individual meetings, and partial group meetings. The author found this process very informative and humbling. The participants came from various churches and experiences yet they took a risk and agreed to trust one another through this process. The presence of their personal pain was evident and the closeness of their hearts to this issue spoke volumes. Their sentiments proclaimed that the church holds a responsibility in every area of the prevention continuum: “Upfront,” “In the Thick,” and “After the Fact.” Inspired by the process, this author created the “Tips for Strengthening Churches as Agents of God’s Shalom” reference sheet.¹⁰ Some of the obstacles that could emerge in utilizing the Hexagoning/Learning team style of data collection include: isolation of those who do not wish to participate in a group process, loss of anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the potential for a limited or narrow participant demographic.

¹⁰ See Appendix C.

In conclusion, Eldin Villafañe's Hermeneutical Circle of Social Ethics provides the framework for thesis. The research methods highlighted in this discourse include team learning and the Hexagoning process. In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, this process provided a valuable pathway for data collection and a safe environment to share information. Now that we've reviewed the research methods, let us take a look at the outcomes, conclusions and recommendations for future study.

PART III: CONFRONTATION

CHAPTER FIVE
OUTCOMES
(CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY)

This chapter sets forth outcomes, conclusions and recommendations for future study, while examining how Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims can be cultivated in and through a para-church ministry like Peaceseekers. The efforts discussed in this chapter occur in conjunction with and as a result of this thesis. The initial learnings/outcomes offered herein take shape as the learning organization philosophy proclaims, “one can never say they have become a learning organization anymore than one can say they are an enlightened person.”¹ It’s always a redemptive work in progress. Our chief aim is always partnership with God as His life flows through His living systems.

Peaceseekers: The Urban Church as Agents of God’s Shalom

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20 NLT)

In the aforementioned text, Jesus tells his disciples to go and make disciples of all, nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all the commands that He has given, being certain of the fact that He is with them always, even to the end of the age. In this biblical text we see the language of wholeness, completeness, nothing lacking. We see the power of producing spiritual generations which arises from the fullness of shalom in the power of the Godhead! Akin

¹ Senge, 10.

to Matthew's presentation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, the Great Commission gives us insight into nurturing churches that are agents of God's shalom. The church serving as agents of God's shalom, nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, arises from and in alignment with the archetype of Jesus training his disciples. Just as true discipleship permeates every area of the disciples' experience, shalom speaks of wholeness, completeness, and reconciliation to God and one's fellow man. As agents of God's shalom, the church serves as the disciples of the God of Peace bringing the peace of God to a fallen world. This process that Jesus sets forth becomes the model for the Living System Ministry practitioner. As we explore the ministry of Peaceseekers in the following paragraphs, this paradigm is foundational to their work. An overview of Peaceseekers is found in Appendix D. This section highlights the following three areas of Peaceseekers ministry informed by this thesis: 1.) Discipleship with Survivors of Homicide Victims, 2.) The Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative, and 3.) Lady Peaceseekers Retreat.

Discipleship with Survivors of Homicide Victims

In *The Adventure of Discipling Others: Training in the Art of Disciplemaking*, Ron Bennett and John Purvis introduce a three-module training outline on discipleship as arising from scripture. The modules include: 1.) Understanding the Blueprint, 2.) Laying the Foundation, and 3.) Building the House.² While one may perceive the Bennett-Purvis outline as being steeped in "works model" language (building a house), this author contends that their language speaks of divine works. Incorporating the living system language of 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 (planting, watering, God bringing the increase), the

² Ron Bennett and John Purvis. *The Adventure of Discipling Others: Training in the Art of Disciplemaking* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003).

Peaceseekers outline endeavors to illustrate this point.³ The author contends that the combination of the two speaks of God as the divine architect and the giver/sustainer of life. For, “except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Ps 127:1a KJV) The following outline incorporates the teaching points suggested in the Hexagoning process within an adapted Bennett-Purvis module concept:

Module 1: Understanding the Blueprint (One man/woman plants)

Process of the Gospel areas: Observation & Positive Appreciation/Regard

Session 1: Description of a Disciple

Session 2: Description of the Church

Session 3: Ministering Life to Life

Session 4: Description of the Kingdom of God/Shalom

Session 5: Putting it into Practice

Module 2: Laying the Foundation (Another man/woman waters)

Process of the Gospel areas: Relevant Communication & Perceived Needs

Session 1: Biblical Peace versus the World’s Peace

Session 2: Violence, Suffering, Grief and Loss

Session 3: Communicating Shalom/God’s promises/God’s principles

Session 4: Praying for Peace

Session 5: Assessment, Partnership, and Practice

Module 3: Building the House (God brings the increase)

Process of the Gospel Areas: Basic Needs & Multiplication

Session 1: The process of discipling

Session 2: The process of shalom-seeking

Session 3: Spiritual Generations

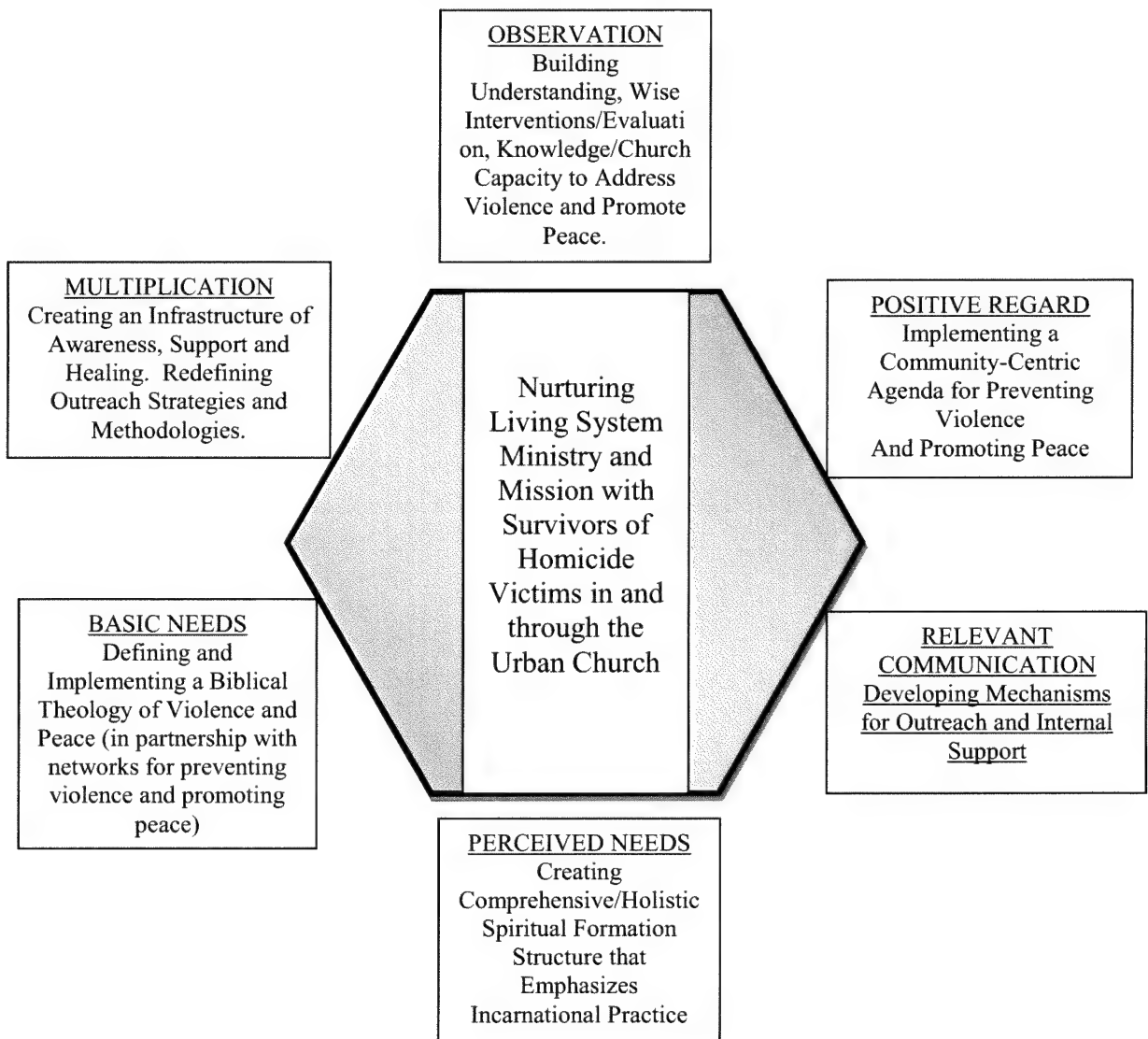
Session 4: Putting it into Practice

Session 5: Evaluation

³ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

Understanding that God makes living systems, nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, declares that the city, and the church are living systems; and survivors are suffering members of God's living systems. The Hexagoning, learning team and curriculum process above endeavor to provide a strategy by which the Living System Ministry practitioner seeks alignment with God's life as it flows through God's living system. This process is visually represented within the causal loop diagrams of Chapter Four, and further illustrated by the following curriculum hexagon.

Curriculum Hexagon



The aforementioned curriculum formed from the Hexagoning process in Chapter Four seeks to nurture disciples who will nurture disciples that nurture disciples. These disciples are Living System Ministry practitioners who nurture Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church. Some of these disciples are also survivors of homicide victims, who continue to inform the work of the church as they perform the work of the church. In addition to the information provided by survivors in previous chapters, survivors also stressed the following during the Hexagoning/learning team process: 1) The Church must learn to listen to survivors with an unassuming ministry of presence, 2) The Church should not be so quick to push survivors towards forgiveness remembering that forgiveness is a journey 3) The Church must provide survivors' ministries in addition to prison ministries. 4) The Church must learn about grief and be sensitive to the needs of the grieving. 5) The Church must have flexibility with its policies and procedures in order to support survivors of homicide victims ("works model" church policies and procedures may not nurture living system vitality), 6) The Church must realize that no two survivors are the same, 7) The Church must be available for survivors, 8) The Church must be involved with survivors before, during and after the funeral, 9) The Church must be a safe space for survivors where they won't be judged or ridiculed, 10) The Church must journey towards healing/peace together with survivors.

The following community chaplaincy initiative incorporates the above curriculum/discipleship process within the training of its chaplains.

Community Chaplaincy

Peaceseekers is committed to cultivating partnerships for preventing violence and promoting God's peace. Recognizing not only the importance but the necessity of approaching the issue holistically, chaplains are equipped with skills to minister in the upfront, in the thick and aftermath of violence. As "ministers in the workplace," chaplains not only serve in the aftermath of crises, but are a consistent healing, skilled, preventative presence within organizations and communities on the daily basis.

More and more policy makers, communities, and organizations are realizing that we need effective and sustainable strategies to address the issue of violence in our communities. Chaplains are a necessary part of these strategies, spiritual paramedics, if you will. Peaceseekers in collaboration with its community partners launched The Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative (GBCCC). The GBCCC is a prevention and response team providing spiritual and emotional care within communities, highlighting the distinct benefits of the chaplaincy relationship, the importance of addressing community trauma, and violence as a public health problem. As the coordinating partner for this Collaborative, Peaceseekers notes that effective prevention evolves from synergy between all sectors, including community members, grassroots organizations, faith leaders, academicians, and policy makers, participating with God as His life flows through His living systems. In nurturing Living Systems Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims in and through the urban church, serving as agents of God's shalom, chaplaincy partners bear in mind the following lessons learned from this thesis project and prior efforts:

1. The work of Professional Chaplains offers distinct benefits to individuals, families, organizations and the communities in which they serve.

2. Chaplains are first responders and vital partners in providing a continuum of emotional and spiritual care in the “upfront”, “in the thick” and “aftermath” of violence.
3. Violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned or not learned in the first place; it is preventable.
4. Cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved lower violence rates.
5. Addressing and preventing trauma at the community level builds resilience helping individuals and communities to heal and thrive, strengthening the immune system of God’s living system.
6. Community members, clergy, mayors, police chiefs, school superintendents, and public health officials have stated that violence and community trauma are serious issues and responses inadequate.
7. God makes living systems and we must approach the city and all of its living components as such; understanding that these orderly, highly complex, and highly interrelated arrangements of living components work together to accomplish a high-level goal when in proper relationship to each other. Peace is a high-level goal! Effective and sustainable violence prevention and peace promotion happen as we participate with God as His life flows through His living systems.

In nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims, survivors serve as GBCCC chaplains. Survivors continue to inform the lessons learned for this group and hold the team accountable to the redemptive method. “This Community Chaplaincy Collaborative is a significant asset to our region,”⁴ said Chaplain Clementina Chéry, who founded the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute after her son was murdered in Boston. “The Chaplains currently serve within a variety of organizations and communities, and also provided support in the aftermath of the Sandyhook tragedy and

⁴ Peaceseekers in Partnership with the International Fellowship of Chaplains announces the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative, 2015, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.seekthepeace.org>.

the Boston marathon bombing.”⁵ “The cost of violence and community trauma is severe; Chaplains play a vital role in facilitating holistic healing – mind, body and spirit – they are key to seeking the peace of our communities.”⁶

Lady Peaceseekers Retreat

In the beginning, God rested on the 7th day from all of His work of Creation (Genesis 2:2.). God did not need to rest for we know the Bible tells us that God neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4). God modeled for us the importance of Sabbath rest. Jesus also modeled this for us throughout scripture. He often went to a solitary place to rest and commune with God the Father (Mark 1:35 KJV). We also learn by looking at Moses in the book of Exodus, that it is foolish for God’s leaders to attempt to lead alone (Exodus 18:13-27). It is exhausting and actually disregards God’s instructions to His church. God has given all of us gifts for the building of the kingdom. No one person is gifted to do everything. Therefore, the church needs to have realistic expectations of pastoral leadership. Accountability structures for self-care. Establishing structures and guidelines for self-care allows the church to care for its leaders and hold them accountable to God’s expectations of His children. Clergy self-care strengthens the church. Clergy self-care is not a product, but a process.

The Lady Peaceseekers Retreat was created to address the self-care needs of female clergy and women in church leadership. Clergy self-care was cited as a significant issue during the Hexagoning process. Many of the survivors of homicide victims leading the call for healing/peace in the city of Boston and nationally are mothers

⁵ *Peaceseekers in Partnership with the International Fellowship of Chaplains announces the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative*, accessed June 20, 2015.

⁶ *Peaceseekers in Partnership with the International Fellowship of Chaplains announces the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative*, accessed June 20, 2015.

of murdered children. Many of these mothers of murdered children are supported in their journeys by female clergy and/or women in church leadership; and some of these survivors are female clergy and/or women in church leadership. This retreat provides an intentional, confidential, safe space where women can heal, refuel and be encouraged in their faith. The retreat is offered annually to 7-10 women and takes place for one week in July on the island of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. The retreat structure is relaxed to give each woman the freedom to seek God for the "life-giving entry point" where she must align herself with God's life as it flows through His living system.

Initial Learnings and Reflections on Doing Living System Theology

The initial learnings and reflections on doing living system theology are as complex and interrelated as God's living systems. This "truth like a cloud"⁷ cannot be fully captured here. Some of these reflections have already been set forth within the "Reflections on the Hexagoning Process and Learning Team Engagement" section of this work. Acknowledging this truth, the initial learnings and reflections on doing living system theology are communicated within the following headings: 1) Time, 2) Politics, 3) Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity, and 4) Systematic vs. Systemic.

Time

Initial learnings revealed that doing living system theology takes time. A "burning patience" must envelop the heart of the Living System Ministry practitioner. The Hexagoning method illustrated that an authentic group process takes time.

⁷ Seeing God's "truth like a cloud," occurs as our lenses are expanded to see and connect multiple variables. Doing truth involves a continual process of redemptive ministry, in which we must constantly deal appropriately with unintended negative returns and unintended positive returns. In this truth, the "initial learnings" mentioned here only scratch the surface of this ongoing process. Professor Douglas Hall's lectures and notes for the Doctor of Ministry Program, Residency II, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary-Boston, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, June 17, 2011

Identifying and soliciting buy-in from a broader audience, especially those most directly impacted by violence would have required more time. Those who are serving in the upfront, in the thick and aftermath of violence often have very tight schedules partially due to all of the complexities they are navigating within living systems. As a result of this truth, a good deal of advanced notice is often necessary to include a broader audience; and the day and time of meetings must take many factors into consideration. In reviewing the times set aside for Hexagoning groups, this author could have offered something later in the evening around dinner time and served more food. This may have helped with attendance and participation. There is no guarantee even with a later meeting that attendance would have been greater as all of the different groups in a city hosting meetings often compete for the same time slots. This was the case for the Hexagoning group with survivors that was cancelled because of another meeting that was scheduled at the same time in the aftermath of a violence related crisis.

Another time related learning was that the Hexagoning process is worthwhile but tiring. Perhaps a retreat format could be more effective for this process. Participants need time to process and engage. The subject matter is emotionally intense requiring time to take breaks, wipe tears, laugh, disengage and re-engage. An interesting time related learning that emerged during Hexagoning is that most of the participants involved had been working in the upfront, in the thick and aftermath of violence for fifteen years or more. Overall, participants found the process worthwhile and expressed interest in contributing to Hexagoning groups around other topics and/or questions that were not investigated in our time together.

The time related truths articulated above were not just the reality during the Hexagoning process; they have been the reality throughout the journey of doing living system theology. Time remains a space for learning as we do living system theology because in our humanity we function within time and God is eternal. Embracing this truth directs the Living System Ministry practitioner to his theology of prayer. Through prayer the God of Shalom will direct the Living System Ministry Practitioner into timely alignment with His life as it flows through His living system.

Politics

Politics can be defined as political affairs or business; especially competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership (as in a government).⁸ Politics exist within the city and within every living component of the city, including the church. As previously mentioned, the Hexagoning participants discussed the politics of the church as something that has to be navigated in our work. In doing Living System Theology, the Living System Ministry practitioner will face competing interest that exist within the city and its organizations. As the Hexagoning/learning team process was taking place for this thesis, the author became aware that the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston⁹ had hired a consultant to do interviews with people about violence and the role of the church. Upon learning of this reality, the author invited the BMA consultant to participate in the Hexagoning/learning

⁸ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *Politics*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics>, (accessed on January 5, 2015).

⁹ The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston (BMA), established in the early 1960s, is an alliance of over 80 faith-based and community-based organizations with a 40+ year history of serving the Black community in Boston. The BMA's mission is to provide spiritual nurture for clergy, and advocacy and program services for the larger Black community. As part of its mission, the BMA demonstrates its ability to create positive change in the Boston area. <http://www.bmaboston.org/node/2>, (accessed on February 23, 2015).

team process. The consultant accepted and was a committed member of our team learning process. This was an unintended positive consequence of doing living system theology. While the BMA Consultant could have been viewed as a competing interest, the author rejected this contention, aligning herself with God's life as it flowed through His living system.

Another initial learning in the area of politics came when the Governor of Massachusetts called a meeting on the same night that the survivors Hexagoning group was scheduled. The Hexagoning meeting was cancelled due to the many survivors participation in the Governor's meeting. While this was not immediately noted as an unintended negative consequence of the process, it became so as the author was unable to reschedule the survivors Hexagoning meeting within the allotted time of this thesis-project. The politics of this process revealed that whenever possible most people would prefer an audience with those who are able to influence policy and legislation around the issue at hand. While top-down decision making about policies usually produces resistance,¹⁰ as the people provide life-giving advisement to government officials the policies that come forth are no longer top-down but policies resulting from team learning. This is actually of benefit as it is one of the prevention spectrum levels outlined in Chapter one that is necessary to advance effective/sustainable prevention efforts. Therefore, while the politics of the cancelled meeting yielded an unintended negative consequence pertaining to the information that the author was able to gather for this thesis, ultimately the author's hope is that the meeting with the Governor permitted survivors voices to inform state government producing alignment with God's life as it flows through His living system.

¹⁰ Hall, 43.

Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body.

And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you;' or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:4-37)

In doing living system theology, dynamics of homogeneity and heterogeneity surface. The author likens these dynamics to the discussion in 1 Corinthians 12, where the use of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ (the Church) is compared to the human

body. The human body is a living system just as the body of Christ is a living system. Every part of the body is important. Every part of the living system is important. Unity in the midst of diversity requires that homogeneity and heterogeneity dwell as one. As reflected in the Corinthians text, this does not always happen with ease. “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you;’ or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Corinthians 12:21). As was mentioned in the discussion of politics, competing interests become an issue in doing living system theology. The components of the living system within the Church and/or the city must remain cognizant of the importance of each of its members.

Within the Hexagoning process, the author found that the heterogeneity of the mixed clergy, lay leader, survivor group contributed to a greater nuanced conversation. The climate of the discussion was more intentional and multifaceted. People chose their words more carefully and listened intently to the experiences of those present. The homogeneity of the clergy only group produced more laughter having greater “clergy-centric” nuances to the discussion and the climate was very relaxed. While both groups had a rich discussion, the character of the interactions was different based upon the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the group. The Hexagoning process makes provision for diverse perspectives so unity in the midst of diversity was a natural outcome.

In doing living system theology with the community chaplains, issues of heterogeneity versus homogeneity manifest as the chaplains represent various church traditions, spiritual gifting, life experiences, genders, areas of service, etc. The chaplains are unified in their positive regard for “doing the Bible,” and their commitment to

constantly learning about the social systems in the Bible and how they relate to the social systems in which they serve.

Doing living system theology in discipleship with survivors of homicide victims encompasses heterogeneity and homogeneity complicated by traumatic grief and loss. Every survivor's experience is different and the manner in which they engage the grief process is complex. Walking alongside survivors of homicide victims in life to life discipleship keeps the Living System Ministry practitioner's theology of place, peace and prayer ever present with a keen sense of burning patience. The survivor is thrust into many systemic components following the murder of a loved one and the discipleship process must engage every component. Partnering with God as His life flows through His living systems in discipleship with survivors of homicide victims, requires assiduous support socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. The Living System Ministry practitioner must disciple as a "learner/systems thinker" who demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit in and through their relationship with Christ and others. The unity in the midst of diversity that is required for vitality will flow from the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control at work in and through the Living System Ministry practitioner.

Heterogeneity and homogeneity play a role in doing living system theology with the Lady Peaceseekers Retreat. While the retreat is geared towards a homogeneous group of women, the women represent a diversity of experiences, giftings, and church traditions. The women connect around the physical, social and spiritual sharing their realities and seeking God's shalom in their journeys. They discuss how they are seeing God at work through the systems that they are engaged with and each woman is

challenged to expand her lens to see and connect multiple variables. The women share their challenges with “doing the bible” and encourage each other to avoid drifts from spiritual vitality. An unintended positive consequence of this retreat is that male clergy are desiring a similar environment as they learn about the principles of the retreat.

Systematic vs. Systemic

Systematic theology is structured through detail complexity using limited conscious thought. It does not necessarily nurture a practitioner-scholar. Systemic theology attempts to expand conscious thought so it can hold a higher number of variables and relate to the dynamic complexity of God’s creation and Kingdom. This is what makes a practitioner-scholar.¹¹

Doing living system theology requires a systemic approach acknowledging that “all that we do - as good as it seems - can easily become part of the larger problem, because systemic problems can be caused or amplified by what we do to solve them.”¹² Accepting the reality that things could go wrong, and making this the starting place, allows the Living System Ministry practitioner to be clothed in humility. Working with survivors of homicide victims has taught this author to acknowledge that her efforts could very well do nothing to help and may even make the problem worse. Homicide forces the practitioner to start with the reality that s/he is part of a fallen world. Every day involves a process of unlearning the Western attitude of “knowing what to do,” and embracing the redemptive method with its inherent truth that only God produces fruitfulness and vitality. At our best, we understand that we do not cause fruit to happen, we seek alignment with God’s life as it flows through His living system!

¹¹ Professor Douglas Hall’s lectures and notes for the Doctor of Ministry Program, Residency II, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary-Boston, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, June 13, 2011 (Italics added for emphasis)

¹² Hall, 108.

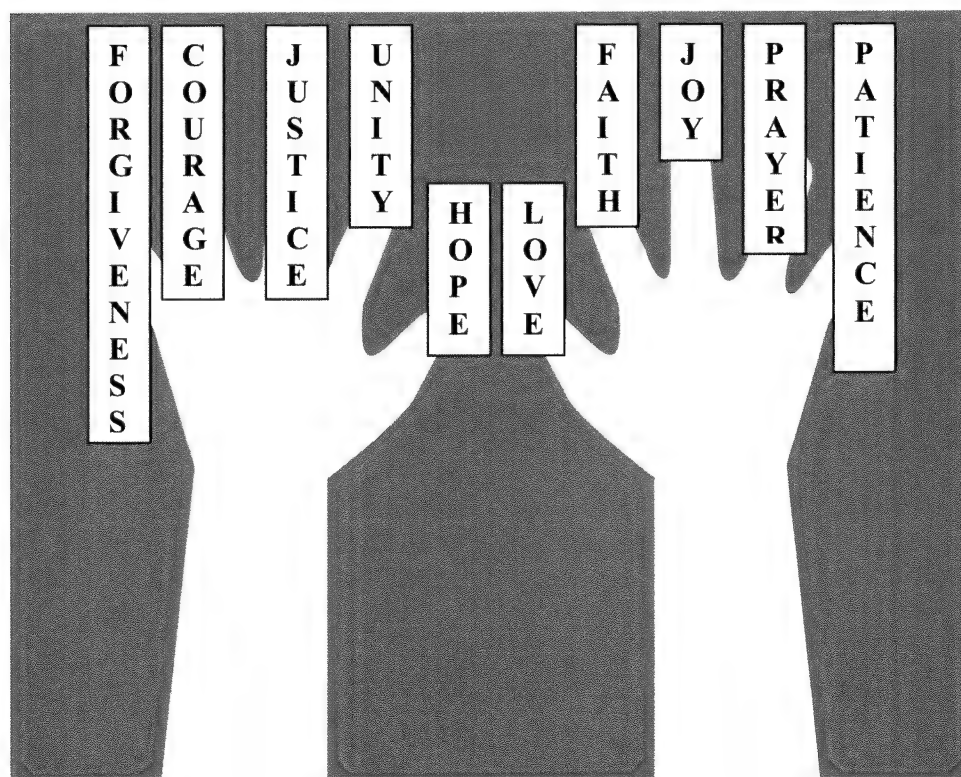
Principles for Cultivating Living Systems Ministry and Mission with Survivors of
Homicide Victims in and through the Urban Church

This thesis project incorporates the disciplines of public health, living system theology and systems thinking as a strategy for bridging the gap between the Church's theology and praxis. The principles proclaimed throughout this discourse, as espoused through the aforementioned disciplines are divine revelation. As Jeremiah 29:7 exhorts the Church to seek the shalom of the city, it is this author's contention that true public health can only be manifest when God's *shalom* is at work. God creates living systems. Survivors of homicide victims, the city and the Church are God's living systems. God must be active in restoring them to holistic health (shalom). Followers of Jesus Christ (the Church) are intimately acquainted with the God of shalom. Having thereby experienced God's shalom, the Church has a responsibility to share the shalom of God with a fallen world – in need of this biblical peace that promises wholeness and reconciliation.

Mentioned in Chapter Three of this work, the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, a Boston-based organization founded by survivors, uses seven principles of peace in their service as a center of healing, teaching and learning for families and communities dealing with murder, trauma, grief and loss. Peaceseekers has adopted these principles of faith, hope, love, unity, justice, forgiveness and courage, teaching principles of peace bible studies and promoting these principles within its violence prevention efforts. These principles are not independent of one another but each builds upon the other to give aspiring peace practitioners a picture of God's shalom. As a result of this thesis, the

author has added the principles of joy, patience and prayer to its curriculum, promoting a ten principles of peace paradigm. This paradigm is visually represented by two hands raised in a posture of surrender, each finger representing a principle of peace (as pictured below). The principles of shalom are inexhaustible acknowledging that they are birthed from the God that makes orderly, highly complex and highly interrelated living systems. The original seven principles of peace as set forth in this work honor seven as the biblical number of wholeness and completion. The ten principles as presented in the principles of peace paradigm honor ten as the number of commandments given by God (Exodus 20:1-17), therefore representing man's responsibility to keep the commandments and the principles that govern them. This thesis has examined a facet of how God's living systems are impacted when the sixth commandment, "you shall not murder" Exodus 20:13), is broken. As living system ministry practitioners internalize and live God's principles of peace, they will participate with God as His life flows through His living systems.

Ten Principles of Peace Paradigm



Recommendations for Further Study

This discourse has examined how the urban church might nurture Living System Ministry and Mission with survivors of homicide victims. Given the holistic view of complex interrelated systems set forth in this work, recommendations for future study are limitless. Based upon a review of the literature, learning team engagement, the Hexagoning process and this author's experience with the issue, the following recommendations for future study are encouraged:

1. Studies focusing on the Church's engagement with male survivors of homicide victims verses female survivors of homicide victims.
2. Studies focusing on the Church's engagement with parent versus sibling survivors.
3. Studies evaluating Church based prison ministries that reach out to perpetrators of homicide.
4. Studies focusing on the Church's development of ministries to survivors of homicide victims in partnership with prison ministries and restorative justice ministries.
5. Studies examining the Church's development of ministries to victims of violence that survive violent acts perpetrated against them.
6. Studies examining vicarious traumatization in clergy and lay leaders that minister to survivors of murder victims and communities most directly impacted by interpersonal violence.
7. Studies analyzing the Church's impact through partnerships with other systems (criminal justice, healthcare, educational, governmental, etc.) in the city in serving survivors.
8. Studies examining the Church's involvement with survivors in engaging the prevalence of gun violence in the United States.

The aforementioned recommendations for future study expand the scope of this present work, addressing the Church's involvement with nuanced areas of survivorship, systemic engagement and the prevalence of gun related homicides in the United States.

While there are many more recommendations that could be cited, the recommendations above are deeply rooted in this author's personal experience. On September 10, 2001, the author's mother was shot while working in her garden in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This had a deep and lasting impact on the family and community. The author recalls the trauma of sitting by her mother's hospital bed on September 11, 2001, watching the New York City World Trade Center fall,¹³ filled with anger and grief and perplexed at the violence around her. She prayed to God from that hospital room asking for insight on the violence surrounding her and what her role should be in addressing it. Six months following this incident, the author was providentially invited to work with the Harvard School of Public Health's Division of Violence Prevention in Boston Massachusetts. Through these experiences, this author has heard God's heart for survivors and endeavors to seek the shalom of cities, nurturing Living System Ministry and Mission in and through the urban church.

In conclusion, the author acknowledges that her personal experience with violence has shown her that living systems do change internally. Survivors are a strong internal systemic catalyst for change. The disease of violence can change positively through internal dynamics within the system. Survivors often proclaim, "Peace is possible," in their efforts to promote peace in cities. This author declares with them that shalom shall be and is as we participate with God as His life flows through His living systems. Faith is a principle of God's shalom, and it declares that God has restored peace to the city.

¹³Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks>, (accessed September 12, 2011).

Just as the blood of Abel called out to God from the ground, the blood of countless murder victims is still calling out to Him. The faith of survivors declares that though their loved ones are dead, they still speak. These truths are illustrated beautifully in the biblical text:

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. *By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.* By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; *for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* (Hebrews 11:1-10. Italics added for emphasis)

Living System Ministry practitioners, filled with the faith proclaimed in Hebrews 11, hear the blood of murder victims crying out to God from the ground and answer the cry, partnering with God in seeking the peace of cities. They nurture Living System Ministry and Mission in the upfront, in the thick and aftermath of interpersonal violence. They provide assiduous support socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. These Living System Ministry practitioners serve in pursuit of “the *shalomic city*” *which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.* (Hebrews 11:10 italics added for emphasis).

**APPENDIX A – POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FROM HEXAGONING
SESSIONS**

**Urban Violence:
What's the Church Got To Do With It?**

**Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME)**

February 26, 2011

**LeSette Wright, EdM, MA, MDiv.
President, CUME Alumni Association
Doctor of Ministry Candidate**

What 's the purpose of this focus group?

- To engage participants in a thoughtful process regarding violence and the church, highlighting the importance of group intelligence
- To inform the content and process for training ministry leaders.
- To inform partnerships for preventing violence in urban communities.
- To inform Doctor of Ministry Research at Gordon-Conwell CUME.

Overview

- Introductions
- Background
- Hexagoning: Group Intelligence, Process is key
- Debriefing
- Wrap up

"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"



Violence and Peace

Violence is the threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results or is likely to result in injury, death, or deprivation.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Peace is a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, esp. in personal relations; the normal freedom from civil commotion and violence of a community; public order and security; a state of tranquility or serenity.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

Violence and Peace (Cont.)

Violence: wrong, unjust gain, oppression, cruelty, injustice, unrighteousness, damage, falsity, deception

Violence will not be heard again in your land, Nor devastation or destruction within your borders; But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise.

Isaiah 60:18

Violence and Peace (Cont.)

Shalom: Completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safety, health, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment, peace in human relationships and with God especially in covenant relationship.

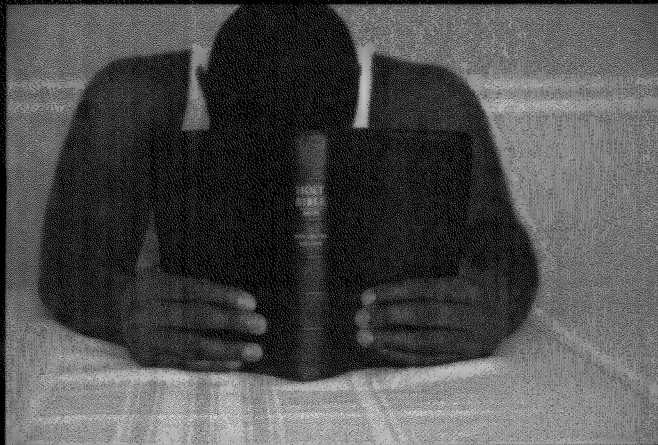
And seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in its peace you shall have peace.

Jeremiah 29:7

Theology

- Genesis 3 – The Fall of Man; Non cooperation with evil is just as important as cooperation with good.
- Romans 5:19 – For just as through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous
- Genesis 4 – Cain and Abel
 - 4:10 – What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground

What questions come to mind when you think
about violence, peace and the church?



APPENDIX B – HEXAGONING QUESTIONS FROM BRAINSTORMING

Hexagoning Group #1

What questions come to mind when you think about violence, peace and the church?
Questions are as follows:

1. What should the church be teaching about violence?
2. How can the church model peace and what does that look like?
3. How can the church deepen and increase its spiritual warfare against the enemy of violence?
4. How do we as the body of Christ see and hear violence in our midst?
5. Does the church create time & space to discuss and learn about violence and its prevention?
6. Does the church enable violence to be perpetuated by non-responsiveness?
7. How do we begin to address violence among church members?
8. How will the church approach the community about the violence in the city?
9. What can church members do to help diminish violence in the city that he or she is exposed to?
10. How can the church serve as agents of God's shalom in the issue of urban violence?
11. How can clergy unite as agents of change in the issue of urban violence?
12. How can the church partner with other systems in preventing violence?

Hexagoning Group #2

What questions come to mind when you think about violence, peace and the church?
Questions are as follows:

1. How can the church serve as agents of God's Shalom in the issue of Urban Violence?
2. How can the church partner with other systems in preventing violence?
3. How can clergy unite as agents of change in the issue of urban violence?
4. How do we sustain and promote relationship building in the community?
5. How does the church use social programming/social media to promote relationships and "right thinking?"
6. How can churches come together often to pray/fellowship to offset violence?
7. Is the church ready to do "serious outreach" to those affected by violence – survivors, perpetrators and others – and not just professionals but a wide cross-section of trained members?
8. Is the church more committed to promoting the abundant life than simply doing funerals?
9. How do we move beyond our press conference ministry, to a more substantive approach to building community?

APPENDIX C – TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING CHURCHES AS AGENTS OF GOD’S SHALOM



Tips for Strengthening Churches as Agents of God’s Shalom

1. We must recognize churches as Family Training Centers
 - a. Rev. Dr. Willie Richardson, Philadelphia, PA
 - b. The language of family training center is important for many reasons
 - i. The church is a family of faith; with its own language and culture. This sometimes lends itself to a “double consciousness.” The church is uniquely positioned to reach the whole family, walking alongside men, women, boys and girls, equipping them with skills for life.
2. If churches are family training centers, then they must be equipped as such.
 - a. Training clergy, lay leaders and congregants regarding domestic violence, community violence, suicide, grief, loss and trauma is vital.
 - b. Training churches to utilize community assets, develop relationships/partnerships and access resources for families is needed.
 - c. Churches must explore, wrestle with and embrace their journeys toward a theology of violence, a theology of peace and a theology of the home. (Theology impacts the way we respond to issues. Is violence preventable or inevitable according to your theology?)
3. Churches must give their ministries the Peaceseekers Litmus Test.
 - a. Upfront (Keep you from sin)
 - i. Assess your ministries on the following: How active is your church in community partnerships for prevention of violence, do you work with schools, family/youth centers, family serving agencies within your community ?
 - ii. Does your spiritual formation program include education around violence prevention, healthy conflict resolution, problem solving and skills for dealing with grief/loss, anger and fear management and resolution? (Teaching biblical principles of peace, such as faith, hope, love, unity, justice, forgiveness, courage). (Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, Dorchester, MA)

- b. In the Thick (Impact of others sin on you which may/may not produce sinful behavior in you)
 - i. Asses your ministries on the following: What resources/ministries do you offer for those who have witnessed violence at home and/or in the community, those that have been victimized by violence, those with parents, spouses or siblings that have been incarcerated or deported?
 - ii. Are there ministries that are focused on mentoring or discipleship in a structured and consistent manner?
- c. After the Fact (After sin)
 - i. Asses your ministries on the following: What ministries/resources do you offer for families of murdered loved ones, victims of violence and perpetrators of violence, those re-entering the local church after experiencing trauma/incarceration, families and communities in the aftermath of violence, healing and reconciliation ministries/resources that promote a restorative justice model and/or teach people how to navigate systems (criminal justice, educational systems, mental health/health care systems)?



APPENDIX D – OVERVIEW OF PEACESEEKERS



PEACESEEKERS cultivates partnerships for preventing violence and promoting peace (shalom) through Education, Consultation and Collaboration. Our mission is expressed in five areas:

- **Peaceable Homes:** We provide counseling and spiritual direction to individuals and families impacted by violence; promoting tools and resources that nurture a climate of healing, safety and peace at home.
- **Peaceable Schools:** We equip teachers, administrators, parents and students with resources to prevent violence, promote peace, cultivate partnerships, nurture positive school climate and facilitate healing/pro-social skills development.
- **Peaceable Communities:** We provide Community Chaplains for organization, as well as, training and consultation to communities concerning violence as a public health issue, effective strategies for violence prevention/health promotion and cultivating partnerships for promoting peace.
- **Peaceable Churches:** We equip churches to provide inreach, outreach and discipleship to individuals, families and communities impacted by violence, promote clergy/lay leader soul care and engage in partnerships for promoting God's peace.
- **Peaceable Colleges/Universities/Seminaries:** We provide training and consultation with academicians, administrators, and students concerning effective health promotion efforts, community engagement, partnerships and community-based participatory research practices.

APPENDIX E– PEACESEEKERS COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, June 09, 2015
For immediate release

Contact:
Chaplain LeSette Wright (609) 277- 3223

Peaceseekers in Partnership with the International Fellowship of Chaplains announces the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative

On Sunday, June 21, 2015, Peaceseekers in partnership with the International Fellowship of Chaplains will hold an ordination service for the first cohort of the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative. The Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative is a prevention and response team providing spiritual and emotional care within New England communities. For over two decades, the pioneers of this Collaborative have worked to promote the distinct benefits of the chaplaincy relationship, the importance of addressing community trauma, and violence as a public health problem. As the lead partner for this Collaborative, Peaceseekers cultivates partnerships for preventing violence and promoting God's peace; noting that effective prevention evolves from synergy between all sectors, including community members, grassroots organizations, faith leaders, academicians, and policy makers. As we strive as a city and region to build effective and sustainable strategies towards peace promotion and violence/trauma prevention, we have a responsibility to bear in mind the following lessons learned from prior efforts:

1. The work of Professional Chaplains offers distinct benefits to individuals, families, organizations and the communities in which they serve.
2. Chaplains are first responders and vital partners in providing a continuum of emotional and spiritual care
3. Violence is a learned behavior that can be unlearned or not learned in the first place; it is preventable.
4. Cities with more coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved lower violence rates.
5. Addressing and preventing trauma at the community level builds resilience helping individuals and communities to heal and thrive
6. Community members, clergy, mayors, police chiefs, school superintendents, and public health officials have stated that violence and community trauma are serious issues and responses inadequate.

The Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative understands that violence/trauma prevention continues to be a high priority of the City of Boston and its community partners. "This Community Chaplaincy Collaborative is a significant asset to our region," said Chaplain Clementina Chéry, who founded the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute after her son was murdered in Boston, "the Chaplains currently serve within a variety of organizations and communities, and also provided support in the aftermath of the Sandyhook tragedy and the Boston marathon bombing." "The cost of violence and community trauma is severe; Chaplains play a vital role in facilitating holistic healing – mind, body and spirit – they are key to seeking the peace of our communities.

For more information on Peaceseekers and the Greater Boston Community Chaplaincy Collaborative, please email chaplains@seekthepeace.org

APPENDIX F – HEXAGONING GROUP EVALUATION FORM AND SUMMARY



Violence: What's the Church Got To Do With It? FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION

Please take a moment to answer the following questions about today's focus group.
Your responses will help improve future sessions.

Please circle the number that closely matches how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

| | | STRONGLY DISAGREE | | | STRONGLY AGREE | |
|----|---|------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1. | The meeting site was conveniently located. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | The facilities were acceptable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | The facilitators were helpful and polite. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | I would attend other forums offered by this ministry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

This focus group...

| | | DISAGREE | | | AGREE | |
|-----|---|-----------------|---|---|--------------|---|
| 5. | enhanced my knowledge of the Hexagoning process | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | enhanced my understanding of the churches role in the issue | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | challenged me toward new strategies for promoting peace | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | gave me a new tool with which to work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | encouraged me to take new actions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | challenged me toward partnership & working collaboratively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | enhanced my skills as a community/institutional leader. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | was a good networking opportunity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | challenged me to explore my theology of violence & peace | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | The refreshments provided were adequate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | My overall impression of the focus group is positive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16. Were your expectations of the focus group met?

Yes (1) _____ No (2) _____

Please explain.

17. Are you a Gordon-Conwell Alumnus?

Yes (1) _____ No (2) _____

If Yes, Year of Graduation _____

18. What, if anything, was missing from today's focus group?

19. What topics would you like to see offered at future focus groups/trainings/forums?

20. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

=====

Please fill out your contact information below:

Name: _____

Organization/Church: _____

Mailing
Address: _____

Phone number (h): _____ (w): _____ Email: _____

Best time to reach you by telephone:

Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Evening _____

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY!

The Hexagoning group evaluations scored between 4 and 5 on each item. All participants stated that their expectations were met. Additional comments from participants include:

- I'd like to see/participate in focus group on how churches can partner with other systems in preventing violence and promoting peace.
- This was a great experience! Thoughtful and enjoyable. I am grateful!
- Fried Chicken and Hot Sauce were missing from this meeting. Lol!
- More clergy should have participated in this. Shame on them!!!!
- More participants would have made the process more dynamic.
- I'd like to attend a future focus group or forum on integration of violence prevention/peace promotion with discipleship in the urban church
- Is it possible for us to connect the findings of all of your focus groups?
- There could have been more people but other than that nothing was missing!

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VITA

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Rev. Wright is a Senior Chaplain with the International Fellowship of Chaplains, providing support in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombing and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. She is the founder of Peaceseekers, an organization devoted to cultivating partnerships for preventing violence – promoting peaceable homes, schools, churches and communities. Rev. Wright serves internationally to enhance the youth violence prevention efforts of cities, advising government, academic, community and faith-based entities on effective and sustainable public health efforts; providing counseling and spiritual direction with survivors of homicide victims, and training clergy, educators, families and communities in the significance of trauma, grief and loss, and social, emotional and cultural competencies.

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